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Comics-based literary trails: the case of Tintin and the Saint-Nazaire landmarks

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UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH

**COMICS-BASED LITERARY TRAILS:
THE CASE OF TINTIN AND THE SAINT-NAZAIRE LANDMARKS**

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth
in partial fulfilment for the degree of
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Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Research Masters has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to assess whether Hall et al.'s Circuit of Culture theory and pattern are applicable to a cultural object such as a literary trail based on a comic book. The case under study is a literary trail inspired by the comic book character of Tintin in the city of Saint-Nazaire, France.

It uses the prescribed holistic approach while relying on interviews and hard data collected from local sources to the trail as material for analysis. Two main interviews were conducted with the founder of the trail and president of the association *Les 7 Soleils*, which helped provide an insightful outlook on the literary trail. The thesis examines the Tintin-related trail from the perspective of production, consumption, regulation, identity and representation, and draws from sources involving both the source material and the location.

It acknowledges the model as applicable to the cultural object and recommends the use of such an analysis for objects of a similar nature. This thesis concludes with recommendations to potential Destination Management Organisations that may consider engaging in a literary trail project based on a comic book character or series.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis focusses on the case study of a literary trail based on the 'Adventures of Tintin' comics by Hergé (pen name of Georges Remi, 1907-1983) and located in the city of Saint-Nazaire, France.

Starting in 1995 and over two decades, the non-profit association *Les 7 Soleils* designed, ordered and put into place a series of *jalons* (=landmarks) across the city of Saint-Nazaire, most of which are giant enamelled metal reproductions of panels from the original comics¹, with the support of the Moulinsart SA, the Hergé foundation, local and EU funds, and local businesses. These landmarks celebrate the fact that the protagonists from the *Tintin* series (Tintin himself, his dog Snowy and Captain Haddock) stopped by the city as part of the story *Les 7 Boules de Cristal*² (Hergé, 1948³). Within the story, Saint-Nazaire is relevant as the characters are looking for a missing friend, Professor Calculus, whose kidnappers are trying to leave Europe for South America. While at the time of writing, Saint-Nazaire had not been a transatlantic port for years due to World War II, Hergé used this older version of the city in his work (Goddin, 2007). The section relating to the city spans 5 pages and 38 panels in total, several of which were used for the actual landmarks across the city.

In order to fully comprehend both the scope and limitations of the literary trail under study, it is necessary to provide contextual information about both Hergé's work, which inspired the trail, and the city where it is located. Hergé's series *Les Aventures de Tintin* spans 23 completed comic books featuring the eponymous reporter, written over 47 years (1929-1976), which encountered great commercial and critical success in Belgium, in Europe and throughout the world (Farr, 2003). According to the official Tintin website Tintin.com (2014), Hergé's work had been translated in over 100 languages by 2014, which demonstrates the widespread popularity of the series. Stylistically speaking, Hergé is acknowledged as the founding father of the highly influential *Ligne Claire* style in comics, a term which was coined in 1977 by Jooste Swarte to describe Hergé's style (Gaumer, 2010). The *Tintin* series was initially published in *Le Petit Vingtième*, a youth supplement to the Catholic Belgian newspaper *Le Vingtième Siècle*. While this religious influence is tangible in the earlier books, the adventures of Tintin are generally praised as universally appealing (Algoud, 2016) and well documented compared to other productions made at the time,

¹ Please note that the term 'comics' can be used in the singular to refer to a series or the medium as a whole.

² 'The Seven Crystal Balls' in English.

³ The full story was published in a book format in 1948, after being pre-published across several years, the original Saint-Nazaire panels being published in 1946.

particularly from *Le Lotus Bleu*⁴ (Hergé, 1936) onwards (Goddin, 2007). While a young medium compared to other forms of art, since the 1930s comics have gone through several stages and obtained more recognition, to the point where they are being studied worldwide in academia (McCloud & Martin, 2014). The medium as a whole is now acknowledged as influential and has gone on to influence other art forms from which it initially drew inspiration, including cinema, theatre and indeed literature itself (Wright, 2003). Tintin's adventures have specifically been the object of numerous studies, leading to the *de facto* creation of the field of 'Tintinology' in the mid-1980s (Lominé, 2003). This research aims to contribute to this specific field by analysing a tangible literary trail based on Hergé's work.

The physical location of the trail is the city of Saint-Nazaire, in the Loire-Atlantique département (France). The city is an important economic centre within the region, both through its shipyard, which produced some of the largest cruise ships in the world (Pouy, 1992), and its aeronautical industry, via the Aerolia (formerly Airbus) site where all the company's planes are assembled (Marsh, 2010). From the mid-19th Century, the city industrialised and developed itself around its shipyard, becoming the first French city to produce modern ships using metal hulls.

The main features of the city pertaining to the trail are the fact that it once had a regular line to Central America (Pouy, 1992), which Hergé was obviously familiar with given his use of reference material (Goddin, 2007), but also the fact that 85% of the city was destroyed during World War II air raids by the Allied forces, due to its strategic importance as a naval base (Robin, 2015). This event in particular is relevant for a variety of reasons, one of which being that by the time Hergé drew the section of the story taking place there in 1946, the city he depicted no longer existed. The literary trail therefore serves as a simultaneous homage to both Tintin and Saint-Nazaire's past (Bréus & Chemin, 2017). The founder of the trail, Jean-Claude Chemin, expresses it this way:

'En racontant cette aventure, Hergé a placé ses personnages dans un temps qui n'existe pas, puisqu'à aucun moment il n'y parle de la guerre qui déchire le monde, pour les faire venir dans une ville qui n'existe plus : Saint-Nazaire a été détruite à plus de 80% par cette guerre qui sonnera aussi pour elle le glas de la ligne transatlantique.'⁵
(Chemin in Horeau, 1999;58)

⁴ 'The Blue Lotus' in English.

⁵ 'In telling this story, Hergé placed his characters in a time that does not exist, since at no point does he refer to the war tearing the world apart, and makes them visit a city that does not exist anymore: Saint-Nazaire was destroyed by over 80% by this war that would also spell the end of the transatlantic line.'

Given its similarities with classic literature in terms of narrative tools, the comic book medium has also been acknowledged as having literary value by researchers from a wide range of fields, and by artists from an equally broad spectrum (Witek, 1989). However, as far as the researcher could find, the literary trail celebrating Tintin in Saint-Nazaire is unique in its celebration of a comics series, while there are a wealth of literary trails celebrating novels. As a result of this paucity in resources on the subject matter, the following literature review will be closer in shape to an annotated bibliography, given the specificity of the chosen topic and the flexibility it calls for in terms of format. It will aim to inform the methodology that will drive the following case study and identify a lens through which such a particular case as the Saint-Nazaire comics-based literary trail can be analysed. This thesis specifically aims to identify a framework for analysis applicable to a comics-based literary trail, and thereby provide a resource for prospective Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) wishing to promote a location through a comics-based trail.



Figure 1: One of the Saint-Nazaire-based Tintin landmarks (detail) (artwork by Hergé, 1948)

LITERATURE REVIEW

URBAN TOURISM AND THE HISTORICAL APPROACH

One of the specific branches of tourism that informed the creation of this trail is urban tourism. Mullins (1991) noted the development of tourism-centred cities from the mid twentieth century as an important development in urbanisation, in the sense that these were designed specifically around consumption. Page (1995;16) remarked that this shift has had an impact on urbanisation as a whole, since entire cities were now being built or rebuilt around the idea of entertainment and leisure rather than needs such as housing, a working industry and commerce. Consumption according to Mullins (1991) is to be understood in the broadest sense of the term, and therefore includes not only goods but also services, both of which have undeniably played a key part in shaping urban areas in developed countries. Page (1995) analyses this increase in demand for goods and services as one of the direct consequences of post-war social and societal changes, an example of which is the increase (or introduction, in some countries) of yearly paid leave for workers. In Europe and France notably, the end of WW2 kickstarted an era known as *les Trente Glorieuses*, a concept introduced and documented by economist Jean Fourastié (1907-1990) in 1979; these thirty years of relative economic prosperity led to an increase in living standards, and a greater access to culture and education, notably through the introduction of a third week of paid leave in 1956 and a fourth in 1969 (Fourastié, 1979;24).

Fourastié's work highlights the fact that social and societal changes have, over the years, had an impact on urban environments, consumption, and tourism opportunities. This seems to indicate that in order to be thorough, a study on the development of a literary trail in an urban space ideally is to take the history of said urban space into account. This element seems particularly important in the case of Saint-Nazaire, the city having experienced a revival of sorts in the 1990s, which focused on increasing the appeal of the city through businesses, a remodelled city centre and cultural locations (Desse, 1993).

Tourism also is a mediated activity, which features more than the two groups known as hosts and visitors (Chambers, 1997). A wide range of actors influence tourism, its outcomes and its scope, and a place's history is bound to have some form of influence over its image, and the way the local communities will receive tourists. Commercial urbanism alone was documented by Desse (1993) as insufficient to fully regenerate Saint-Nazaire and its dying city centre, any positive effects remaining 'restricted to the nearest trades' (Desse, 1993;235). The Global Development Project initiated by former mayor Joël Batteux therefore featured input from politicians but also associations, artists and intellectuals (Pouy, 1992), which illustrates the broad scope of actors involved in such a project.

Initial research indicates that the history of Saint-Nazaire is directly related to its choice as a destination: indeed, Hergé was renowned for using the resources available to him as reference, and while some works draw more loosely from their source material than others, there has always been a general concern about authenticity and believability in his Tintin adventures (Goddin, 2007).

Given the limited scope of this thesis, the researcher will not specifically focus on urban tourism studies as an angle, but aim to draw from relevant elements relating to it in the context of a holistic approach, the history of the city having played a clear part in the making of the trail.

DESTINATION IMAGE AND THE CIRCUIT OF CULTURE

A city's appeal as a touristic destination is not solely based on its intrinsic merits: while a city like Paris can boast access to museums like the Louvre, and world-famous locations like the Eiffel Tower, there are other factors that play a role in attracting tourists. These factors are part of the concept of a destination image. Echtner and JR (1995) define two types of components as integral to the destination image of a location: those that are attribute-based, and those that are more holistic in nature. To take an example, in the case of Paris the Louvre museum is a tangible attribute-based component, which plays an important part in the destination image of the city; it is the most visited museum in the world, with over 9,300,000 yearly visitors (European Museums Network, 2020). On the other side of the spectrum are holistic factors, such as the romantic image of the city (informed by a broad corpus of popular books, films and art in general) which may create the perception of an idealised place. This is particularly well documented in works surrounding the 'Paris syndrome' identified in 1991 by Hiroaki Ōta: the gap between expectations and reality when the destination holds such an intense appeal can result in a great shock with psychological consequences (Ōta, 1991). The concept of tourism destination image has become closely linked to marketing, likely 'since it affects the individual's subjective perception and consequent behavior and destination choice' (Bozbay & Özen, 2008;725). In other words, it can make a difference between a tourist visiting one location over another. In the context of this research, it would be valuable to identify whether the literary trail adds in any way to holistic or attribute-based components of the city of Saint-Nazaire.

A specific factor, which arguably draws from both aforementioned components relates directly to literary tourism; In the early 18th century, the first literary tourists started visiting birthplaces, houses or graveyards out of literary interest for writers and poets, and these have, over time, become staples of literary tourism (Watson, 2008:5). These are attribute-based for their tangible aspect (such as a specific location), yet remain

holistic since they can encompass a far broader meaning informed by an artist's work. Tourism Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) aim to develop these connections so that the target destination image increases in appeal, or achieves a higher profile compared to competitors within the same area. While the makers of the trail, *Les 7 soleils*, do not act in any official capacity as a DMO, it will be important to assess to what extent they seek to improve the destination image of Saint-Nazaire through the creation of these landmarks, and whether they are supported by DMOs in that regard.

A means to analyse this trail from a broad perspective could be Halls' concept of the Circuit of Culture (1997). Hall argues that culture as a concept can be understood in terms of shared meanings, and art and media are the most common means to circulate these meanings (Hall, 1997). Indeed, in a globalised world, information of all types has never been easier to share, which notably led to the emergence of the concept of popular culture (Storey, 1993). Hall (1997) highlights that culture draws meaning from five different key interconnected moments, which are all part of a 'Circuit of Culture', and include: representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation. While research-wise, this model mostly served to discuss cultural artefacts such as mobile phones (Goggin, 2006), the framework itself was designed to encompass any type of cultural object or text, and could in theory be applied to a specific series of comics. Therefore, attempting to apply this representational scheme to a comics-based literary trail could potentially lead to a better understanding of this rarely represented topic.

COMICS LITERACY

The medium of comics has, as discussed above, progressively integrated general, popular culture, to the point where even individuals having read no comics or very few will successfully identify comic book characters, objects or locations (Witek, 1989). This is not unlike video game characters whose fame expanded far beyond their original medium, to the extent where Pac-Man and Mario are recognised by 94 and 93% of American consumers respectively, regardless of any video game experience (Guinness World Records, 2016). Similarly, in the case of France and Belgium (and many more other European countries), Tintin as a character is part of this widely known and acknowledged popular culture (Dunnett, 2009), and his adventures in comic book form alone sold over 240 million copies, with about 16% of annual sales in France (Audigane, 2016).

While characters and comic book series are recognised and easily identified by many, Tulloch (in Sørensen, 1998;2) further argues that comics-literate individuals (having more experience of the medium) are particularly fond of stories calling up for rarer,

specific knowledge which is in fact likely to be missed by the average reader – not because the knowledge in question is missed by others, but because it is successfully interpreted by the individual despite its specificity. This is noted in *Comic Book Culture* (2010) by Pustz, who analyses that ‘fans’ are by far the bigger purchasing category when it comes to American comics, and that authors therefore need not worry about alienating a ‘non-fan’ audience. Indeed, Pustz (2010) notes that both Marvel and DC (the two biggest American comic book publishers) have effectively acknowledged that non-readers are unlikely to become regular readers, and have come to favour a dedicated fanbase over a more general audience. This is a paradoxical situation since it has made for more and more complex universes which have, to an extent, become inaccessible to the average reader.

Pustz (2010) further argues that favouring comics literate individuals not only increases reader enjoyment, but also the pleasure of producers/authors, who were once fans themselves and are therefore keen to create stories that will reward dedicated readers: in a sense, modern artists write the stories that they once would have enjoyed reading themselves. This idea that comics literate individuals are more likely to note and therefore appreciate these ‘Easter eggs’ seems to be shared by comic book film producers, who now cater to their audience by making use of these in a wide variety of ways (Beaty, 2014).

Nye (1980) argues that although Franco-Belgian *Bande Dessinée*s (comics) were initially quite influenced by American comics, a shift occurred post-war, in the 1950s, with some European authors more clearly targeting an adult audience rather than children alone, more specifically by attempting to make their work understandable on several levels. Most of the popular Franco-Belgian authors opted for a status-quo type of approach in order not to alienate their readership; a common example of this is the fact that in the *Astérix* comic book series by René Goscinny (1926-1977) and Albert Uderzo (1927-2020), history is suspended and in the end, few events alter continuity. While characters experience many adventures, they remain preserved from the effects of time (Garcia in Ortolí, 2014). In *Astérix*, almost every adventure ends with a celebratory banquet in the Gaul village, as a means to indicate that all is well that ends well and that the status quo is restored. A similar effect is used in another comic book in which Goscinny took part: the *Lucky Luke* series, whose action takes place in the Wild West and whose final panel almost always features the main character singing as he rides into the sunset. Extended knowledge of the source material remains rewarded throughout the story, yet any adventure can be picked up by a reader of any age and understood as a whole for its own merits and the way characters tackle the issue at hand (Nye, 1980; 185).

When it comes to literary trails specifically, determining whether extended previous knowledge of the material favours enjoyment and appreciation would be an interesting path to explore. Indeed, while the classic hypothesis would be to assume so, it could very well be that memories from one's childhood can provoke equally strong emotions as an encyclopaedic knowledge of a source material does. Any tourist interview should therefore take that factor into account, and aim to gauge accurately how familiar each individual is with the Tintin stories before assessing their personal experience of the Saint-Nazaire literary trail. At the very least, it is worth trying to understand to what extent a work of art can bring about different degrees of understanding and enjoyment in an audience. Finally, when analysing the impact of a literary trail on its target audience, it is important to bear in mind that the trail was designed by people sharing a specific culture, in which comics as a medium may play a more important part than they do in British culture.

The British culture of comic books happens to greatly differ compared to what can be found in France and Belgium: Little (2010) acknowledges that while British comic book authors, writers and artists do exist and have always existed, many have initially encountered more mainstream success by working on American comics. Alan Moore, Garth Ennis and Neil Gaiman, to name but a few, all worked for American comic book publishers and experienced global success, leading to what some have come to call a 'British Invasion' of American comics, a process which started as early as the 1970s. This is notably documented by Little (2010) and Witek (1989).

Comics are however still somewhat popular in the UK, too; the biggest print runs featuring comics are by far newspapers such as *Private Eye* (233,869 issues sold on average over six months), while publications dedicated purely to comics like *Viz Comic* (published by Dennis) can still sell an average of 48,000 issues over six months, as documented by Freeman (2019). *Beano*, a historic staple of British comics, remains popular to this day through its online version, with 2.5 million viewers in 2016 and 1.86 million paper copies sold in 2017 according to its publisher, DC Thomson (2018). These remain high numbers, yet proportionally weak compared to the sales of French comics magazine such as *Le Journal de Mickey* (which features American, French and European creations), with 5.9 million issues sold in 2014 (Woitier, 2014). Moreover, in spite of a slow decline in French comics magazine sales over the last decade, overall paperback sales have increased in that same period (Oury, 2020). This reflects, generally speaking, a greater interest from the French audience in the medium compared to other audiences.

In other words, comic books in their different forms can have a different impact depending on a variety of factors, which will vary depending on the national and local culture. Analysis of the case subject is to acknowledge this fact and aim to use appropriate data pertaining to comic book culture in order to be truly relevant as a whole.

METHODOLOGY

The topic of a literary trail based on a comic book and celebrated through a series of monuments (landmarks) and exhibitions makes for an original case study, since literary trails are traditionally based on more classic literature, and projects of this scale remain the exception rather than the rule even in such cases. This paucity of resources was notably noted by Munnuka (2001), who wrote about the theoretical possibilities for comic-based tourism. The unusual nature of the case study naturally calls for a mixed-method approach, since no one approach could be expected to successfully analyse this complex topic on its own. Robinson and Andersen (2011:3, cited in Saretzki, 2013; 62) define literary tourism as ‘the tri partite relationship between authors, their writings, and the concepts of place/landscape’.

Saretzki adds to the above quote that ‘It can be regarded as a kind of special interest tourism, and also as part of the heritage and cultural tourism sector’ (2013; 62).

A literary trail, in particular, seems to match this definition perfectly since it is precisely where author, writing, and place meet in a somewhat tangible way. This also relates to the idea of comics as part of national heritage, where a sense of comics literacy is passed on from generation to generation and a literary trail expands upon this connection. The case study therefore ought to take this possible definition into account and ensure to analyse to what extent it applies to the cultural object under study.

Focussing specifically on the Saint-Nazaire case study, the researcher reached out to the association *Les 7 Soleils* in the early stages of this research, and made contact with Jean-Claude Chemin, the president and founder of the association. Mr Chemin kindly agreed to discuss and exchange knowledge about the trail, notably via interviews, and later provided the researcher with a wide range of valuable documents which could have otherwise proven complex to track and acquire. He was described by Nick Rodwell, Managing Director to Moulinsart SA, which was created to protect and promote the work of Hergé, as ‘one of the rare few who shows a total respect towards HERGE and his Work’ over the course of an email exchange with the researcher. Mr Rodwell also highlighted that the Saint-Nazaire literary trail ‘was a Project of Jean-Claude Chemin. He organized everything from A to Z’, which further convinced the researcher to interview him. Mr Chemin signed the ethical consent form as appropriate prior to any interviews taking place, and was extremely cooperative and patient throughout this research.



Figure 2: Jean-Claude Chemin in front of one of the literary trail landmarks, by Bouzigues for Ouest-France (2013)

While the topic itself is not urban tourism, it is a fact that the city under study was destroyed during World War II, and the vitality it once experienced over the early 20th century came to a halt on several occasions since (Desse, 1993; Pouy, 1992). Given the city's main activity as a shipyard, it directly experienced the consequences of national and international economic downturns: in fact, even *Les Trente Glorieuses* (Fourastié, 1979) as a period somehow weakened the city in the context of a quickly globalising world (Réault, 1995). It would seem that the whole project surrounding the celebration of Tintin's journey was first formulated as such during a series of conferences aiming to discuss the future of Saint-Nazaire as a city, which seemed gloomy to many in the late 1980s (Bréus & Chemin, 2017). Future research will therefore aim to implement a degree of analysis relating to urban tourism in the context of a holistic approach to reflect the complex situation of the shipyard city. This may in fact be integrated into the Circuit of Culture theory, under the category of Identity.

The concept of a Circuit of Culture, as developed by Hall, Evans and Nixon (2013), was identified as worth investigating in the sense where it could potentially apply to a complex cultural object such as a literary trail. If found truly applicable, it could help the researcher analyse a comics-based literary trail via an existing pattern, which could prove valuable and make the study easier to replicate in the future. Indeed, it could help highlight and understand what makes such a format different from a more classic literary trail, whilst analysing the reasons for its continuous development.

THE INTERVIEW AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Several un-structured interviews have been used as a means to collect data by discussing the object under study; two of which were with Jean-Claude Chemin, president of the association which created the trail, and a shorter one with Pascal Fréneau from Le Grand Port Maritime de Nantes Saint-Nazaire, one of the sponsors of the trail. All three interviews were conducted by the researcher. Interviews with other sponsors from the trail were considered, but did not come to fruition due to a lack of response from said sponsors, or the fact that the individuals involved in the early stages of the trail had since left the business in question.

Interviews themselves can take several forms, which were notably defined by Burgess (1993). In practical terms, structured interviews feature a set amount of questions articulated around a specific theme; the interviewee's only real input is to respond to these. Skinner (2014) identifies this method as a particularly common one when it comes to survey research, where quantitative data is required. On the other hand, un-structured interviews can take a variety of forms themselves, but normally imply more of a conversation between interviewer and interviewee, and therefore a mutual, more spontaneous exchange. Kvale (cited in Skinner, 2014;8) argues that this less structured method allows for the co-creation of a resource, in the sense where it is the result of an actual exchange of ideas rather than a series of questions answered by one individual. A less structured interview was therefore deemed to be more suited for this case study, which aims for qualitative analysis.

One of the obvious drawbacks of interview as a research method identified by Skinner (2014) is the way of deciphering the data collected, since the resulting document can be interpreted in a variety of ways. The outcome of an interview is, in the end, a narrative, which requires interpretation from the researcher through discourse analysis. Accurate, objective interpretation may very well be impossible, even more so since the researcher him/herself often takes part in the interview - an issue which was clearly identified by Skinner (2014) in his introduction to the interview as a research method. In order to counteract this, the researcher's analytical method drew from Foucault's 'surfaces of emergence' discussed in *L'archéologie du savoir* (Foucault, 1969) and further documented in Wight (2018). Wight states the following:

Naturally, any attempt to advocate for an objective definition [of discourse analysis] is futile, and there is much to divide the philosophical underpinnings of the available approaches to take when doing discourse analysis for research purposes. However, one idea that offers some unity is the idea that discourse analysis is concerned with a certain way of talking about, and indeed representing, the world. In addition, it is useful to consider that discourse analysis is not simply a method but a holistic approach to research. (Wight, 2018;123)

The resources created as a result of the interviews proved particularly useful since they came from individuals with a high level of expertise within their fields (namely Tintin, Saint-Nazaire, and the trail itself), and were lengthy enough to provide information for analysis. The data was extracted through repeated listening of the resources produced, which helped the researcher develop ‘an accumulation of familiarity’ (Wight, 2016;62) with the discourse of the respondents and identify key components of it. It is worth mentioning that since questions remained open to input and discussion wherever possible, the resulting recordings have been treated as a resource created in collaboration with the interviewee, and referenced as such.

NETNOGRAPHY

Beyond specialist knowledge provided by key actors from the trail, this case study will aim to isolate tourist feedback to highlight recurring themes or ideas present across it. The landmarks being scattered across the city and most locals simply walking or driving past them during their daily routine, it would have been complex for the researcher to obtain a satisfactory number of responses from tourists. Voluntary online feedback provided by tourists that was made available publicly on online blogs and dedicated web pages was therefore selected for analysis as part of one section of the thesis. This draws from the field of netnography, a portmanteau word made from ‘internet’ and ‘ethnography’ and exploring the latter in the context of digital communication (Kozinets,1998).

Acknowledging the limitations of the resources and methods used is particularly important, and such limits have been highlighted by Bartl, Kannan, and Stockinger in their *review and analysis of literature on netnography research* (2016;168). A key limitation of netnography over more classic ethnography is the range of the target group, and a (usually) purely textual format over a wider range of options. There are however advantages to the method, among which a lesser bias from the researcher due to the lack of direct input on their part (Ellis, Wojnar & Pettinato, 2014), as well as a relatively short duration of study and a potentially faster analysis (Bart, Kannan & Stockinger, 2016).

Given the very specific topic under study and the paucity of resources on the comics-based trail, data collection focused on keyword analysis (‘Tintin’ and ‘Saint-Nazaire’). A choice was made to exclude any results featuring identical phrasing by different individuals (likely due to press releases from DMOs), as well as any informative news items, since the objective of this section was to identify tourist response to the trail. 11 individual respondents were selected and suitably anonymised (any additional

feedback was considered to be too concise to provide analysable data) and the feedback grid was attached (Appendix A) and analysed under Findings and Discussion.

As a final note, Due to the popularity of Hergé's work in France, Belgium, and most European countries, many a scholar has studied and analysed his work, leading to the relatively modern field of study known as Tintinology - referenced by Lominé (2003) and Algoud (2016) among others. Reference will be made to studies from this broad body of texts whenever relevant to the analysis. For example, Philippe Goddin's 2014 series *La malédiction de Rascar Capac* (Goddin, 2014), which analyses Hergé's diptych *Les 7 boules de cristal/ Le temple du Soleil* has been identified as containing a wealth of information, notably as far as Hergé's reference material was concerned. Furthermore, Tintin's books as a whole are considered by Lominé as 'an original yet valid form of travel writing' (Lominé, 2003;59): this is particularly interesting since Hergé (with a few rare exceptions) never visited the places that he depicted in his work, and instead relied on reference material alone. His work was informed by external data more so than personal experience (Algoud, 2016). This allows for discussion on how an artist may depict a location without having visited it, and how they can convey the identity of a location regardless.

The objective of this study is to successfully determine to what extent the conceptual framework of a Circuit of Culture applies to a comics-based literary trail, and to better understand the potential goals and limitations to such an enterprise. The trail will be analysed via the key components of the Circuit of Culture under Findings and Discussion, and all sections will be informed by interviews with the founder of the trail, given his specialist status on both Tintin and Saint-Nazaire.

The conclusions of this research will focus on aiding Destination Marketing Organisations explore the prospect of a developing literary trail based on comic book characters for a suitable location.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

THE CIRCUIT OF CULTURE

The object of this study is to analyse the Saint-Nazaire literary trail based on Tintin's adventures by using the theoretical framework of the Circuit of Culture. As a logical result, a choice had to be made regarding which version of the Circuit the researcher should use. Indeed the concept was developed and used by several researchers over time, and is interdisciplinary in nature. Below is a Circuit of Culture concept summary by the researcher, which lists the five 'moments' that it encompasses (as per Hall, Evans and Nixon, 2013):

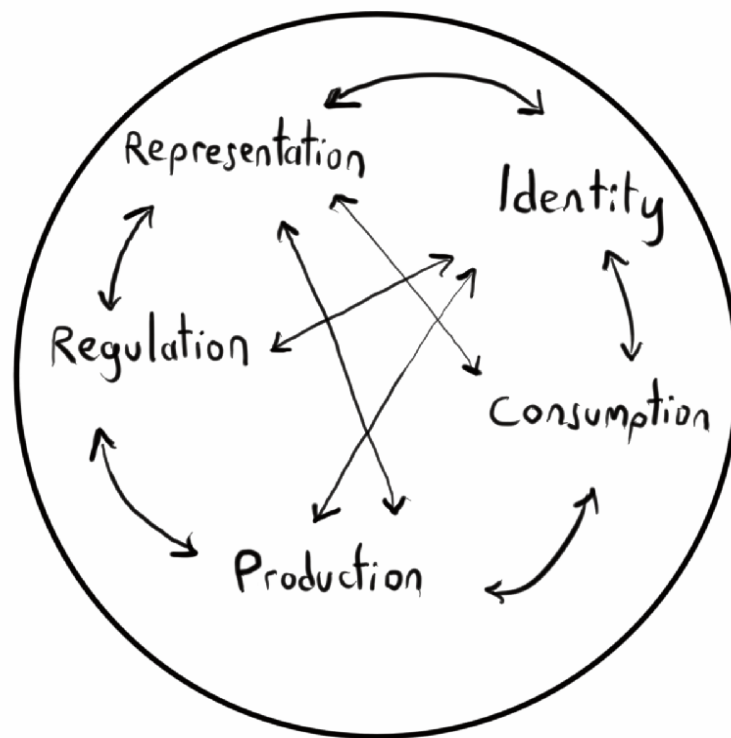


Figure 3: Circuit of culture - representation (Bréus, 2019 as per Hall, Evans and Nixon, 2013)

These five moments are, as per the graphic above, inter-connected and each play a part in analysing the cultural meaning of the artefact. Other slightly different models have emerged over time: Burgess, for example, focussed more on the encoding and decoding of specific aspects of a phenomenon- climate change and its representation in the media, for example (Burgess, 1990). The main component that does remain across variations on the Circuit of Culture resides in its holistic approach as a framework. It does not analyse isolated, independent components but considers them as part of a whole, a section of a bigger, meaningful picture (Leve, 2012).

Defining the cultural artefact

As discussed above, the Circuit of Culture has so far served as an analysis tool for a variety of cultural artefacts, and both of the aforementioned studies used it to discuss physical goods which could be purchased and used by individuals – the Walkman (du Gay et al., 1997), and the cell phone (Goggin, 2006). The objective of this case study is to apply this same lens to a less concrete cultural object. This study will focus on the case of a literary trail inspired by a comic book by Hergé, *Les 7 boules de cristal* (1948) which was implemented within the city of Saint-Nazaire, in Loire-Atlantique, France. The Circuit of Culture is an interesting concept in the sense that it acknowledges the social role of culture, and allows analysis of a cultural text (in the broadest sense of the term) through several, inter-connected lenses. This acknowledgement of the role of culture has grown in social sciences over the years, as noted by Du Gay et al. (1997).

Comics as a general concept could be considered a cultural object, and so could a popular series such as Tintin – indeed, they convey a shared meaning that is likely to be recognised by many, thanks to the way comics follow an organised structure and a set of conventions that are shared by thousands of authors, artists and readers (McCloud & Martin, 2014). A city could, too, be considered as a cultural artefact so long as a clear angle is picked, even though this would likely be pushing the definition to its limit- indeed, the number of shared meanings naturally increases exponentially the broader the topic gets, and it would make little sense for a researcher to undertake such a task. The object of this study will therefore neither be the comics nor the city, but rather the literary trail inspired by the Tintin comic book, within the city of Saint-Nazaire, in France. This does not however mean that neither will be discussed or analysed, since both of these components played a key part in the trail from its inception. This will allow for a narrow focus on an object that is rather unique in its abstraction, yet deeply connected to cultural meaning.

Risks and limitations

The cultural object studied is a literary trail, created and developed at the initiative of the French non-profit association *Les 7 Soleils*. As the most important actor in the creation of the trail and founding member of *Les 7 Soleils*, the president of the association is going to be the researcher's main resource as far as hard data is concerned, and will also be asked to reflect on the trail and its progress.

It is worth pointing out at this stage that the researcher is French and spent the first 20 years of his life in Saint-Nazaire, and has therefore been familiar with the city, the literary trail, and its source material for several decades. This is both an asset and a

risk, in the sense where personal knowledge is beneficial but may induce subjectivity. A clear, conscious effort will therefore be made to actively reduce this bias. Every effort will however be made to use personal knowledge in a way that is beneficial to this research work, and better inform it.



Figure 4: Tourists in front of one of the panels located by the submarine base (Bréus, 2018)

Starting point

Referring to the five key components of the circuit of culture (also known as moments) as defined by Hall, Leve states the following:

‘Any one of the ‘moments’ can be chosen as a starting point; it doesn’t matter where an analysis starts, as long as account is taken of the entire nexus, and it is observed that each moment relies upon the others for the cultural meaning to fully emerge.’
(Leve, 2012:5).

Indeed, given the fact that all components are connected to each other, and serve the same overall purpose to extract meaning, any one component may be used as a starting point. All components will therefore be analysed in sequence, and reference will regularly be made to previously mentioned moments to highlight any links between

those. As a final note before addressing the five components, it is important to clarify that while these all play an key part in the understanding of the cultural artefact, not all sections of this work are going to be even: in practice, some concepts have proven wealthier in terms of analysis than others, and this piece of research naturally reflects that discrepancy. Lesser discussed parts remain a key component of the analysis in spite of that potential unbalance.

In order to question and analyse the cultural artefact, the researcher will occasionally refer to questions drawn from the Cultural Studies 101 summary of the circuit of culture available from

<https://culturalstudies101.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/hall-the-circuit-of-culture-ed-fink-11-11.pdf> . This is due to the fact that this resource was adapted from Stuart Hall's *Representation* (Hall, Evans and Nixon, 2013), and the questions raised were found particularly relevant to a literary trail in the context of this research. More specifically, they provide a lens for analysis which can prove valuable in that piece of research.

PRODUCTION

Whether it be applied to a consumable object or a work of art, the concept of production has similar implications. In order to fully comprehend an object, a clear understanding of the way it was produced is necessary. In the case of this literary trail, the fact the president of the association at the origin of the project has agreed to share information with the researcher has proven invaluable for this study, since part of it is not readily accessible to the general public. This section will therefore rely for a major part on information shared over the course of interviews, further documented by press articles relevant to the case, as well as any relevant research on this specific case. Other sources will include specialist literature on the individual topics of Tintin and Saint-Nazaire.

Production is a peculiar component in the case of a literary trail. Indeed, most cultural objects that have been analysed through Hall's circuit of culture concept are either virtually intangible (Eg. The internet) (du Gay et al., 1997) or mass-produced (Eg. Cell phones) (Goggin, 2006). A literary trail relying on the creation and exhibition of physical landmarks such as the Saint-Nazaire one, however, naturally does not fall under either of the aforementioned categories, but rather under the domain of artistic expression.

By their very nature, the landmarks and exhibitions organised and put into place by *Les 7 Soleils* have required important funding, and a range of authorisations/permissions, some of which will be discussed more at length under the 'Regulation' heading. This section therefore specifically focussed on how the landmarks and the trail themselves have come to be, how these were funded, built and put into place. Since the trail itself was started over two decades ago, in 1995, collecting information has proven challenging in spite of valuable resources and contacts, but the overall journey through production has nonetheless been retraced.

Funding and sponsorship

One of the essential questions pertaining to production is related to funding. Where does the money come from, and how do the parties involved benefit from it? The first part of this question has a simple enough answer in theory, although in practical terms it is the result of a lengthy process. Indeed funding has been a concern for the literary trail from the beginning, in the sense that the landmarks planned could not be funded by members of *Les 7 Soleils* alone given the scale of the work to undertake. External funds and support were therefore required, and the association and Moulinsart SA (the copyright owners) agreed to the use of funding coming from the three following sources: European funds, public community subsidies, and funds raised through sponsorship among entities approved by the copyright owner (preamble to the convention between Moulinsart SA and *Les 7 Soleils*). Few detailed figures could be obtained by the researcher in spite of several attempts to contact sponsors, but to give an example, the Loire Atlantique departmental community confirmed to having contributed to a total sum of €30 000 over two payments, in 2002 and 2003, which were paid to *Les 7 Soleils*. They mentioned over the course of an email exchange that this was the full extent of their contribution to the trail. Jean-Claude Chemin stated that for the first landmark, the main sponsors were 'the city, the shipyard, as it seemed important (...), as this is history, and for the concrete it was Les Grands Travaux de Marseille' due to a networking opportunity (Bréus & Chemin, 2017a;42:02).

As far as benefits are concerned in the broadest sense of the term, sponsor names are displayed at the bottom of the landmarks (panels), as shown in Figures 5 and 6.



Figure 5: Photograph of the bottom section of a Saint-Nazaire landmark (excerpt) (Bréus, 2018)

These sponsor names are featured on the same level as other institutions such as the city of Saint-Nazaire, or the European Union, as per the following image (Bréus, 2018).



Figure 6: Photograph of the bottom section of a second Saint-Nazaire landmark (excerpt) (Bréus, 2018)

One could therefore say that sponsors and institutions having funded these landmarks benefit from a form of exposure, albeit limited: indeed, an element worth noting regarding exposure is communication, or the lack thereof. In the aforementioned convention between the association *Les 7 Soleils* and Moulinsart SA, which the researcher had access to, *Les 7 Soleils* specifically agreed to ensure that no commercial profit would be made from it by any of the sponsors, other than the mention of their identity on or near the panels of the literary trail (article 6.3). The association also provided Moulinsart SA with the guarantee that no commercial use would be made of this literary trail by any third party, and agreed to report any such acts as well as seeing to ending them using any necessary legal means (article 6.2). The above measures are a means to ensure that the literary trail remains an homage to Hergé, beyond financial considerations, and undoubtedly were a *sine qua non* condition to the existence of the trail in the first place.

Another important part of production is the identity of key actors - who made or produced the trail, and what were their backgrounds or interests? Specialists from a variety of fields have taken part in the creation of the Saint-Nazaire landmarks. Before the project was submitted to the copyright owners, members of the association *Les 7 Soleils* made sure to have a solid basis for their proposal, as confirmed by Mr Chemin. Architects, designers, and Tintin enthusiasts from a variety of backgrounds, all of whom shared an interest in the source material, helped make the trail come to life. Members of the association made sure that producers were, as much as possible, local to the city, and this intent has been underlined by the president of the association across several interviews (Bréus & Chemin, 2018). The trail was intended as a local homage and external intervention was limited wherever possible.

The researcher notably reached out to several companies and entities having taken part in the funding of the project, as well as political entities. Few of the contacted groups provided a response to the researcher's inquiries, which can in part be due to the fact that the literary trail started several decades ago, and data pertaining to it may be complex to gather in 2019. Mr Pascal Fréneau, in his quality as General Secretary for Le Grand Port Maritime Nantes/ Saint-Nazaire, kindly agreed to a recorded phone interview with the researcher after signing the appropriate ethical consent form, and helped shed some light on the nature of the port's sponsorship at the time (Bréus & Fréneau, 2018). He clarified that while as a sponsor they did provide funds, their participation took several forms. He referred to financial contributions, but also contributions in kind, and assistance with documentation. Mr Fréneau highlighted the port's desire at the time to assist in the creation of the trail and its image by providing assistance of a documentary kind where required. He acknowledged that while the port drew no direct profit, the trail likely helped improve the image of Saint-Nazaire, and as a consequence that of its port. He also stated to having provided documentary resources for several exhibitions and books that were created in collaboration with *Les 7 Soleils* – an example of a less financial kind type of contribution (Bréus & Fréneau, 2018). This also highlights the fact that some sponsors assisted with the durable, permanent aspect of the trail but also participated in one-off events, and that the nature of the participation varied depending on the sponsor.



Figure 7: Photograph of the Saint-Nazaire port area, behind the submarine base (Bréus, 2017)

For the reasons discussed in the previous section, none of the groups contacted drew any commercial profit from it as they were not permitted to advertise their participation in any way beyond the mention of a name on the landmarks. The French company Euremalco produced the first enamelled steel panels and an identical copy, which provided an opportunity for news coverage that would otherwise have been impossible. Indeed, a copy of the first landmark was unveiled in the popular TV show *Nulle Part Ailleurs* on Canal+, two days prior to the inauguration in Saint-Nazaire (Chemin, 2020), attracting further media attention.

When investigating this, the researcher discovered that a similar project to the Saint-Nazaire one was initially considered in Brussels (Belgium) by the flea market square, as discussed by Jean-Claude Jouret in an interview for *Les Amis de Hergé* (2002). This fact was also confirmed by Mr Chemin over the course of the interviews with the researcher (Bréus & Chemin, 2018). While no further explanation is provided in the interview, the project did not go through in spite of the support of local authorities – a case the researcher would have wished to explore further had there been more resources available on the matter.

At the origin of the project

The roots of the project also played an important part in its production. Jean-Claude Chemin and other founding members of *Les 7 Soleils* are, as discussed before, at the origin of the project of a Tintin-based homage in Saint-Nazaire. Given the nature of the association, all members share a strong interest in both Tintin's adventures by Hergé and the city of Saint-Nazaire. Having grown and worked in the city, while at the same time being Tintinophiles, there was an initial desire to celebrate the fact these characters visited the city while potentially revitalising it. This can be connected to the

capital role that arts have the potential to play in urban regeneration, highlighted notably by Wynne (1992). Individuals at the origin of the project knew each other through a variety of ways, and networking played an important part in the creation of a solid project to bring to the Hergé Foundation, particularly since Jean-Claude Chemin knew a variety of key actors from the city through his work as a journalist (Bréus & Chemin, 2017). This was also confirmed by Mr Fréneau over the course of the phone interview with the researcher (Bréus & Fréneau, 2018). Another association of Tintin enthusiasts goes as far as stating that Saint-Nazaire is, alongside Brussels, the city which has best embraced Tintin, thanks to 'the patient work of two eminent tintinologists, Jean-Claude Chemin and Yves Horeau' (Les tintinophiles c'est nous, 2016;1). Mr Horeau (1935-2018) was a writer, tintinophile and member of *Les 7 Soleils* who notably wrote *Tintin, Haddock et les Bateaux*, an extremely well documented book discussing the nautical side of Hergé's work (Horeau, 1999).

The fact that the trail was never designed to be promoted for financial gain arguably made it so that enthusiasts were more likely to join the project in the first place. While funding came from more official institutions or companies, all shared an interest in promoting the city and, for most actors, a personal interest in the Tintin stories. As part of a regeneration project, some actors have also backed this project given its potential to improve the cultural profile, and destination image of the city. Jean-Claude Chemin, while not entirely certain whether it was the case yet, did agree that the association was working on strengthening that connection between Tintin and Saint-Nazaire (Bréus & Chemin, 2017a; 1:12:25), thereby improving the destination image of the city.

The city of Saint-Nazaire itself, as discussed briefly in the methodology section, had been experiencing downturn after downturn by the time this project came to be and its city centre was slowly dying by the 1980s, the architecture and town planning deemed 'mediocre' by its own inhabitants (Desse, 1993;235). This idea of a literary trail ended up indirectly joining several other projects to revitalise the city, some of which were integrated to the Global Development Project initiated by the mayor at the time, Joël Batteux (Pouy, 1992). The transatlantic lines that once took illustrious passengers such as Nabokov, Albert Londres and Maïakovski to South America stopped running in 1940, when the German occupier took the city over and built the submarine base where the ships once docked, which abruptly put an end to these lines (Sicard, 1991). The city since resumed its activity as a shipyard and a port after the end of World War II, notably with the world-famous Chantiers de l'Atlantique (which delivered several of the the biggest cruise ships in the world such as the Harmony of the Seas). However, this more exotic part of its history remains in the past and ships leaving the city normally go to either their home destination or New York as a christening journey (Pouy, 1992). The city's past does hold weight still, however, and many a writer has described the city's charm and appeal as a port – the current city's motto being 'Saint-Nazaire, le port de tous les voyages' (*Saint-Nazaire, the port of all*

journeys). Julien Gracq (1910-2007) is, among others, often cited for having shared his love of the shipyard city. While he wrote these words several decades after Hergé had Tintin visit the city in *La Forme d'une Ville*, the terms he uses are not without reminding the reader of Tintin's own experience:

Le vrai port, pour moi, parce qu'il ouvrait directement sur la mer, parce qu'on y lançait les plus gros bateaux, et parce qu'il était le port d'attache des navires-rois : les paquebots transatlantiques rouge, blanc et noir de la ligne des Antilles et de l'Amérique centrale (...), c'était Saint-Nazaire : vraiment, lui, une porte océane, où le vent du large ridait perpétuellement les flaques du boulevard de Ville-ès-Martin (...).⁶
(Gracq, 1989;835)

An aspect as pragmatic in theory as Production cannot be dissociated from that history and the part it played in the creation of the literary trail: it is indeed history that likely convinced Hergé to pick Saint-Nazaire over any other port, which later sparked the desire in others to celebrate this connection between his creation and the city. The history of the city is, in more ways than one, part of the making of this trail, and certainly helped favour its production. Many of Tintin's adventures take place, at least in part, at sea or in ports (over 65% of them feature boats), which is well illustrated by one of the landmarks from the Saint-Nazaire trail: the orientation table, which features the location of other (real or fictitious) ports visited by Tintin . To that extent, one can state that the trail pays a broader homage to Hergé's work and one of his most prominent themes.



Figure 8: Photograph of The orientation table, which features a variety of ports visited by Tintin on his adventures (Bréus, 2017)

⁶ The real port, to me – because it opened directly towards the sea, because this is where the biggest boats were launched, and because it was the home port of King Ships : red, white and black transatlantic liners from the Antilles line and Central America (...) – was Saint-Nazaire : it alone, truly, the ocean gate, with the wind from the sea continuously making wrinkles in the puddles from the Ville-ès-Martin Boulevard'

Finally, Chen and Chen (2010) also argue that community attachment has a positive impact on tourism, which in turn provides support for further tourism development. The later developments of the trail were to an extent facilitated by the existing landmarks, which were indubitably well received by the Nazairien⁷ people, who were aware of the history of the city and seem to have appreciated this acknowledgement in the form of an homage to Hergé's creation. This created a form of virtuous circle in which the local people played an indirect part. The trail worked and was well received, favouring further developments, as Mr Chemin confirmed in an interview, stating that the first landmark was without a doubt the most complex to get started (Bréus & Chemin, 2018). This was also confirmed by Mr Fréneau, whose contributions to the trail on behalf of the port took place after the first landmarks had been put into place and was therefore able to gauge their initial success more objectively (Bréus & Fréneau, 2018).

Interest and sponsorship

It is interesting to see that in the context of production, few of the parties would qualify as actual DMOs – technically, only the city of Saint-Nazaire (as an entity) and its tourist office do, on the grounds that they are directly involved in Destination planning as defined by Morrison (2013), through the city's *Projet de Développement Global* (later renamed PGD, altering the acronym), that is to say its Global Development Project. Other key stakeholders are either companies having decided to sponsor the trail, and of course the copyright owners. Since any businesses having sponsored the trail were explicitly forbidden from making profits out of it, one could argue that the businesses involved did indirectly benefit from the exposure given to the city through the trail – they qualify, to a very broad extent, as tourism stakeholders in that they indirectly benefit from the city having a positive image, and these acts of sponsorship help them better said image, as confirmed by Mr Fréneau over the course of the research interview. On another note, the researcher was surprised by the interest displayed by the sponsors contacted for Tintin's adventures – while these might indeed indirectly benefit from the trail, any participants interviewed seemed to have a genuine interest in Tintin and his adventures, well beyond image benchmarking considerations- a fact which is bound to have favourably played a part in the development of the literary trail.

⁷ 'Nazairien' is the French adjective pertaining to the city of Saint-Nazaire, and will later be used on occasion order to remain concise.



Figure 9: Photograph of a Nazairien landmark and the surrounding port and shipyard area (Bréus 2018)

CONSUMPTION

The nature of the object

Another component of the circuit of culture is consumption. How is the object used, and by whom? How is it advertised, can it be bought? Consumption as a concept is complex to apply to most art forms. Art is a cultural object, which cannot be limited to the most literal meaning of consumption, that is to say use by one or several individuals. While some art can be bought, and arguably consumed that way, as a product, this seems like a most limiting definition. Defining art itself has proven a most complex task, so much so that such a question has long remained the domain of philosophers more so than that of researchers. Many have in fact deemed the very fact of attempting to define art to be pointless or even counter-productive given its transcendental, ungraspable nature, and it has certainly been a recurring opinion since the 1950s. Authors such as Walton made a clear distinction between artistic and aesthetic properties, the former being utterly subjective and the latter having to do with one's knowledge of art genres, experience of art history, etc. (Walton, 2007). A common conception of art, shared notably by Kant (1724-1804), is that art is 'a kind of

representation that is purposive in itself and, though without an end, nevertheless promotes the cultivation of the mental powers for sociable communication' (Kant, re-translated in 2000). If art truly has no purpose beyond itself, except the general furthering of sociable communication, it cannot conceivably be consumed the way an average product is.

Given the nature of the Saint-Nazaire comics-based trail, it would be absurd to try to gauge how one would go about consuming these landmarks the way one buys a painting. Additionally, as discussed in the previous paragraph, consumption of art has arguably nothing to do with purchasing a work of art from an artist or gallery, but more so with experiencing it, witnessing it. This view is notably shared by the maker of the trail, who argues that there are several layers and degrees of enjoyment available to the viewer; in fact, the whole trail was designed to make it so (Bréus & Chemin, 2018;1:30). As public objects of art, the landmarks have been placed in iconic or commonly visited places in the city and can therefore be seen and experienced by the greater number, the most commonly seen of all being by far the copy of the panel depicting Tintin and Captain Haddock leaving Moulinsart and heading to Saint-Nazaire. This landmark was placed by the modern entrance of the city, and is therefore viewed (consumed, in the broadest sense of the term) by the thousands of car passengers driving by every day.

Targets of the trail

The question of who the landmarks target is a key one – as a product in the broad sense of the term, who do they target? Can it be bought, acquired in any way? The art is obviously directed at everyone. It is publicly displayed and available for all to see. People who made it are a select number of individuals which, while they benefit from it themselves (get to see and appreciate the art itself), are not the only ones to do so. Urban art is available to the general public and the target audience is very broad. As stated earlier, the trail itself is designed to appeal to a variety of people from all ages and origins, relying on a variety of factors. Jean-Claude Chemin declared, for example, that a grandparent having worked in the Saint-Nazaire shipyard could enjoy the historical aspect of the trail, while a grandson or a granddaughter could focus on the connection to comics, which they have most likely come across before (Bréus & Chemin, 2018;).

The Saint-Nazaire literary trail is not a product one can buy or pay for in any form. While art is, in many situations, a cultural object one pays for (Throsby, 1994), in that specific situation this is not the case, since it is located in an open, public space and

does not require any form of entry fee. It was obviously funded, but once put into place, the landmarks require little upkeep, which is the responsibility of the City of Saint-Nazaire as per the initial agreement with *Les 7 Soleils* (Bréus & Chemin, 2018). In case of degradations, be they voluntary, accidental, natural or related to wear, the city of Saint-Nazaire is required to restore the landmarks to their initial state and pay for any repairs, as they are works of art under their legal responsibility.

As far as purchasing options are concerned, no official postcards featuring the landmarks are allowed, although pictures taken for personal use are of course allowed. This is as per guidelines from Moulinsart SA regarding the literary trail. This most likely is due to the editor's modern approach to Tintin's image, which consists in favouring quality over quantity in terms of available products, and is renowned for being highly protective of Hergé's creation and their intellectual property.

How is a literary trail 'consumed'?

As discussed earlier in this section, art consumption can be a complex concept. The answers to 'where' and 'with whom' questions can be much easier to answer, but 'how does one consume art?' is more of a conundrum, as art appreciation is subjective, and the term of consumption is somehow ill suited for art. It is however a fact that the general public's view of art has shifted since the Second World War, notably due to societal changes, and a greater understanding of the role of culture in society (Riesman, 1950). Over the course of the late twentieth century, the rise of new technologies has further altered the traditional way of exposing oneself to art, and family outings to museums are no longer the go-to way to expose oneself to art in all of its forms. Given the size of the landmarks and their location, they are very much a part of the urban landscape, and are viewed daily by any locals and tourists passing through either of the city entrances, or the port area. Assessing how many people view any landmark every day would physically be impossible, given the sheer quantity of people that can see it from a distance, go past it in various vehicles, or simply walk by it.

On marketing and signposting the trail

The literary trail is marketed, or rather advertised, in several ways. First of all, any addition to it, or temporary event or exhibition directly connected to it tends to attract press coverage. Indeed, as it has been explained in earlier sections, the character of Tintin holds a form of universal appeal, and is known well beyond the boundaries of the shipyard city he once visited. As such, newspaper articles and web resources have regularly covered the progress of the trail, and exhibitions connected to it (Ouest-France, 2018). Media coverage is particularly important in terms of exposure, since the average audience, while aware of Tintin, will not necessarily consciously seek specialist websites such as *Les 7 Soleils'* own page, or similar Tintin-oriented ones.

As far as the press is concerned, *Ouest-France* is by far the most widely distributed French regional press newspaper with an average of 671 228 papers sold per print over in 2017 (Alliance pour les Chiffres de la Presse et des Médias, 2018). It has therefore been instrumental in promoting these initiatives, and has since regularly published articles discussing and analysing the trail, be it to update the readers on it or to further inform them. Occasional articles are also published to suggest it as an outing for families and tourists, notably around the summertime. *Ouest-France* also promoted events organised by the association that were open to the public, such as a conference on plants in Hergé's work by Yves-Marie Allain, former director to the Jardin des Plantes in Paris (*Ouest-France*, 2018). Heritage tourism often being considered a special interest tourism (STI) (Chen and Chen, 2010), these instances of public promotion of the trail help broaden the spectrum of people who know about it, and therefore increase its exposure.

Les 7 Soleils does also have a website which is, given its very nature (a specialist page dedicated to the work of the association and Tintin-related news), most likely known to Tintin connoisseurs, who have previous knowledge about the association. As such, it offers limited exposure, but allows its specific and highly targeted audience a means to be informed about future events, or to find out more about the literary trail. It also allows news agencies and individuals to get in contact with the association if they have any questions or queries. As far as online visibility is concerned, the association has a Facebook page and a fan-page on the same medium, as well as an online newsletter. Several landmarks are also clearly referenced in *Google Maps* (2018), further facilitating a potential tourist's access to information on their location. Surprisingly, not all landmarks are however referenced, a notable omission being the one next to the tourist office under the submarine base. The Google Maps app is available on IOS and Android and commonly used by travellers, and has become increasingly popular a service over the 2010s, tourists having come to rely on technology as far as rapid access to information is concerned (Kennedy-Eden & Gretzel, 2012). Several of the landmarks are also referenced on some other tourist-oriented websites such as *tourisme-en-france*, with information about them provided by individuals.



Figure 10: Screenshot of a tourism website referencing a Nazairien landmark (Tourisme en France, 2019)

Another means of communication about this trail, which has proven successful according to feedback from the tourist office and Jean-Claude Chemin, is the printing of small brochures in several languages, '*Dans les pas de Tintin*' (Vangénéberg, 2015). These were designed by Moulinsart SA and *Les 7 Soleils* did not have to pay for any copyrighted material in this situation either- only the printing fees were left to the association. Mention should be made of the fact that these were translated into German, Spanish, and English by locals –notably through the local lycée/high school Aristide Briand, staying true to the idea of not outsourcing any work and working with local businesses, entities and individuals where possible.

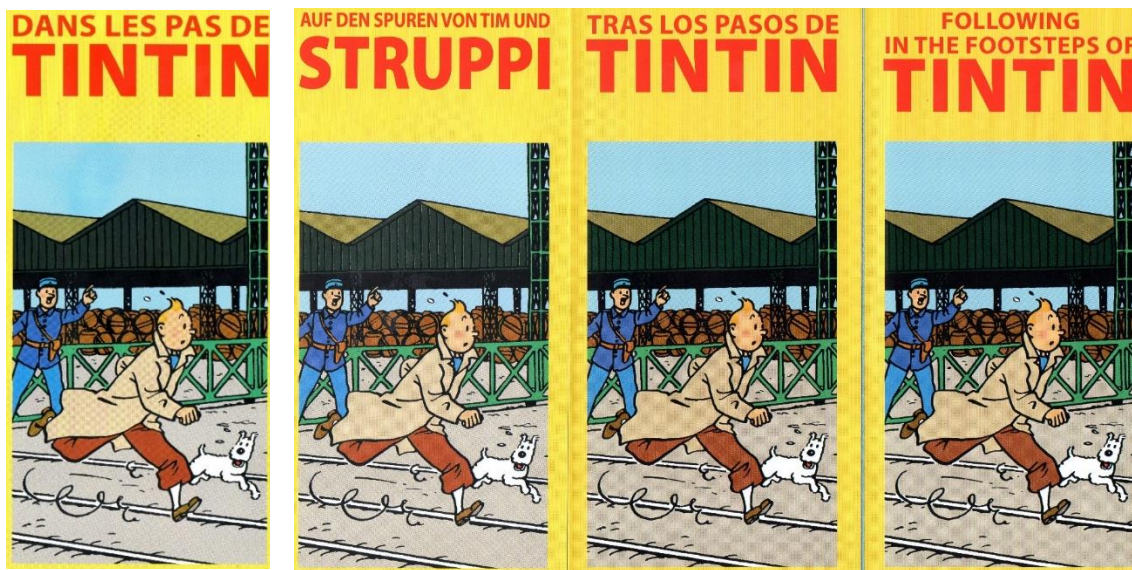


Figure 11: Front page of the tourist leaflets available at the tourist office in four different languages (Vanéberg, 2015)

It is interesting to remark that while every other language features Tintin's name alone, German, the only foreign language to have translated Tintin's name differently (as 'Tim'), also features Milou/Snowy's German name more prominently than his owner's. Other languages simply do not even mention the dog, and focus on Tintin himself, although both characters are depicted on the front page of the leaflet.

These leaflets provide the reader information about the trail, the city of Saint-Nazaire at the time Tintin visited it, provide a map to the landmarks, and include extra information about *Les 7 Soleils*, Saint-Nazaire and its *must-see*, which Mr Chemin deemed important (Bréus & Chemin, 2017a; 1:21:35). They are available in the Saint-Nazaire tourist office and some of the neighbouring cities, notably La Baule. The case of La Baule is interesting as the city itself was created ex-nihilo for touristic purposes and has, over the course of the twentieth century, established itself as a popular seaside resort in France and in Europe. While it would seem that this is progressively evolving, a majority of houses in the city still are secondary residences (Violier, 2002), which highlights the importance of tourism for the city. Having brochures available in the La Baule tourist office is strategically important, as it helps promote the literary trail to a wider audience, which is most likely interested in touristic activities.

Landmarks are also signposted directly on the most widely distributed city map available at the tourist office and train station, among other places. Indeed, on this free map of Saint-Nazaire, the panels and orientation table are indicated by a speech bubble, leading the tourist to realise that these have a connection to comics.

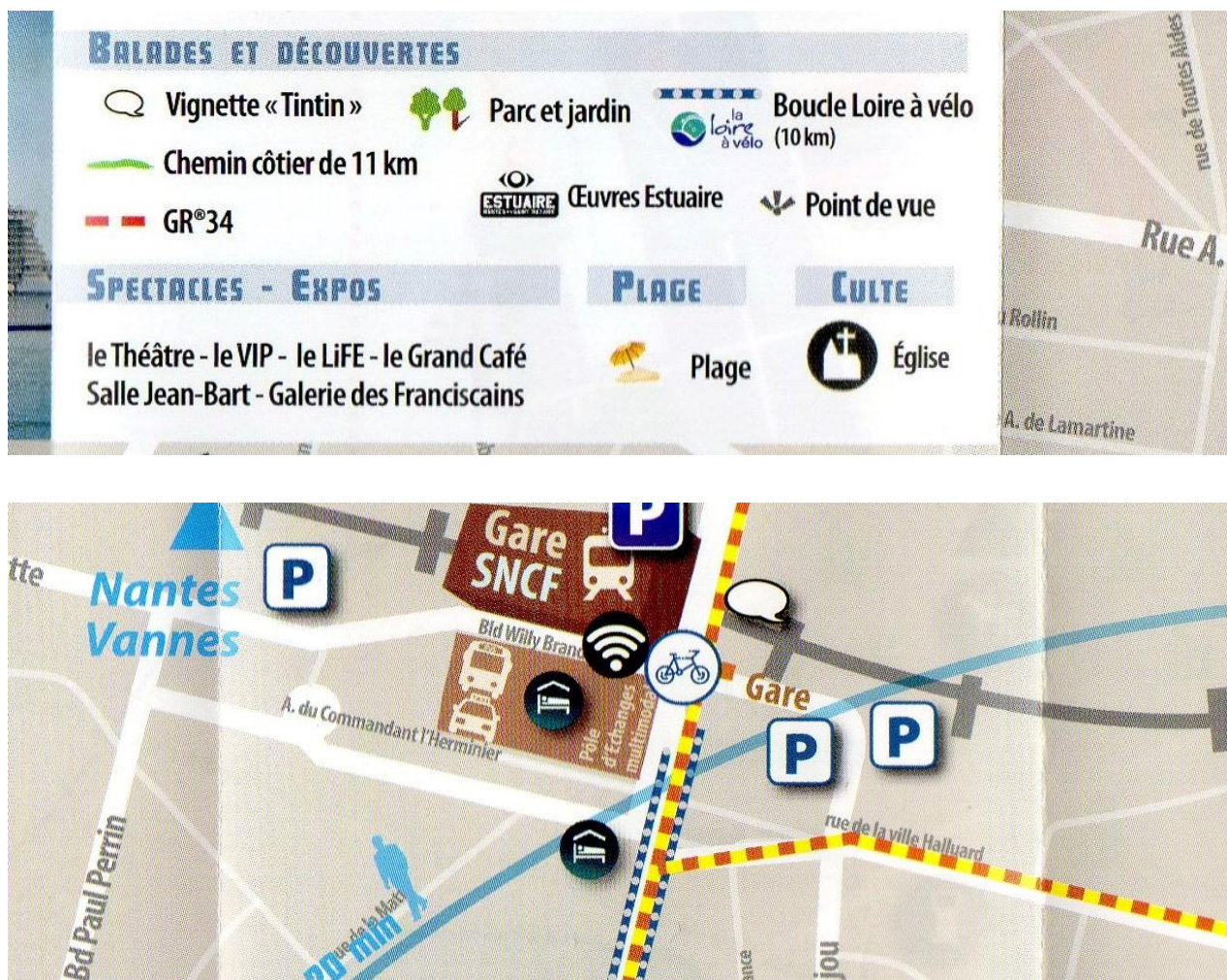


Figure 12: Excerpts from the Plan Touristique 2018 provided by the local Office de Tourisme, which features speech bubbles as a mean to pinpoint the 'Tintin vignettes' (Saint-Nazaire, 2018)

This map features the city's important public spaces such as parks, town hall, museums, places of interest and cultural landmarks, and the fact the panels are clearly displayed on it adds to their visibility, particularly among tourists and travellers. The target audience for these is very broad, and these maps can in fact be found in some neighbouring cities.

To an extent, one could argue that this literary trail also promotes itself – Hergé's line art is renowned for its universal appeal, and the apparent simplicity of his work naturally draws the eye. Hergé himself worked as a publicist and did experience some success in that field, his work in the sector being more colour-based and conceptual at the time (Peeters, 2006). This influence of advertising shows, and the use of colour by Hergé is extremely precise. The structures implanted in Saint-Nazaire are therefore, in a sense, their own best promotional assets.

This literary trail is also peculiar in the sense where it is advertised through all of the above the way a permanent exhibition would be – which is understandable given its permanent and public nature. Information about it was progressively incorporated into communications about the city, maps, and it has a dedicated website which caters to a more specialised audience. Both the general public and Tintin aficionados have resources made available to them, and the former are actively informed by tourism actors such as the tourist office, which in that case has the role of a Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO).

History and geography are also factors that may further facilitate exposure to the literary trail, be it in a practical way, beyond identity-related reasons. The Saint-Nazaire tourist office happens to be located under the city's submarine base, which was built by the Germans during World War II, and ended up replacing the former port Tintin would have stopped by in *Les 7 Boules de Cristal*- whose action is bound to take place prior to the war in any case (Goddin, 2014a) . As a matter of fact, two landmarks from the Tintin literary trail are located within a minute of the tourist office. More specifically, one panel is located less than 20m away from it, as shown in Figures 13 and 14.



Figure 13: The Saint-Nazaire tourist office, located under the former submarine base (Bréus, 2017).



Figure 14: Photograph of the closest Tintin landmark to the Saint-Nazaire tourist office (Bréus, 2017)

The choice of the submarine base as a location for the tourist office most likely stemmed from its important historical significance, and a broader initiative from the city council destined to revitalise the whole area. This includes the base itself, which, while retaining its original appearance, has seen its rooms modernised and now hosts permanent and temporary exhibitions, concerts, and museums such as Escal'Atlantic, which focusses on the city's history and the era of great Cruise Liners. The revival of the submarine base area specifically began with the city council's *Ville-Port* initiative in 1994, whose purpose was to make this part of the city, which had become an industrial wasteland post-war, attractive again –both to locals and tourists (Saint-Nazaire tourisme 2, 2018). This most likely explains the choice of this location for the tourist office, and adds to the idea that history, culture and tourism were, in the case of Saint-Nazaire, to be deeply connected.

Given the close proximity of the tourist office and the landmark, it would be extremely unlikely for a tourist or a group of tourists going to the tourist office not to at least see this one landmark. Whether they investigate it further, come closer to it to read

information about it, or ask questions about it in the nearby office is obviously unpredictable, but such a geographical proximity is bound to facilitate interaction.

As a whole, the literary trail is advertised in a variety of ways, several of which target a different audience. The maps and leaflets are directed at the general public, which may come across these at the tourist office, in a neighbouring city, or at the train station. Other resources, such as the website for *Les 7 Soleils*, target a far more specialised audience, and tend to focus on specialist topics and in-depth analysis. At the time of writing, in 2018, the trail is promoted across the region and on the internet in a wide range of ways. The concept of art consumption is a peculiar one and this component of the circuit of culture does not fully apply to a cultural object such as a literary trail. Indeed, the fact it refers to art induces unavoidable subjectivity, and consumption itself remains a complex topic, particularly in the case of urban art, which is viewed by thousands of individuals daily, few of whom actively stop by it. However, the promoting of a literary trail has proven analysable under the angle of consumption, and the range of resources available to the public plays an important part in its success.

REGULATION

In the case of most cultural objects, regulation often is a straightforward concept due to the limitations of said objects, and the Saint-Nazaire literary trail is no exception. As it makes use of public space and uses copyrighted materials, the simplest way of looking at regulation is to consider the following two questions:

- Which authorisations were required from both local authorities and legal successor prior to the making of the landmarks?
- Which connections and regulations exist now the landmarks have been produced and placed across the city?

As per previous components, this section of the thesis will be informed in part by data provided by Jean-Claude Chemin given his direct experience, including notably some excerpts from legal documents which will help the researcher better understand and analyse the connections between all parties involved.

Legality

The first, essential question when dealing with an intellectual property is to know whether a project involving it is legal, at the risk of jeopardising its continuous existence. In the case of the Saint-Nazaire trail, the project is obviously legal. As far as rights to image are concerned, the Studios Hergé have not only agreed to the use of the copyrighted material but also provided support for this use. Landmarks were also pre-

approved by local authorities, notably the mayor of Saint-Nazaire at the time. Free right of use was agreed to by Fanny Rodwell (Fanny Remi at the time) after a delegation of association members went to Belgium to explain this project. This has been documented in a variety of articles referenced throughout this main text, and confirmed by Jean-Claude Chemin himself, who presided said delegation and organised the trip to Belgium at the time (Bréus & Chemin, 2017).

Another question worth asking is whether the cultural objet is subversive in any way, and if so according to whom. This question is not entirely irrelevant given the fact that the landmarks are making use of public space. As such, one should consider whether the trail is likely to harm sensibilities, or spark controversy. However, since the trail has now existed for over twenty years at the time of writing, a more relevant question would be 'have the landmarks been criticised, and if so, on what grounds?' In this specific occurrence, the researcher feels comfortable referring to their personal experience, having lived in the city for several decades and not having come across a single occurrence of the landmarks being criticised in any shape or form. Research conducted for this thesis since has confirmed this first personal impression. At the time of writing, the researcher can safely state that no such controversies have arisen from the presence of the Saint-Nazaire landmarks, which have fully integrated the Nazairien landscape.

A note on urban art and street art

At this point, it is important to make a distinction between approved urban art, and street art in the general sense of the term. Indeed, street art itself has long had a love/hate history with city councils, some cities seeking to control it, some others seeking to ban it, and some, more rare this time, encouraging it in specific areas. To an extent, the Saint-Nazaire landmarks are a form of urban art, available for all to see, and some could in fact classify these as street art, regardless of the fact that these were produced with the city's approval and support. However, unlike this trail, as the result of artistic expression, street art is often complex to institutionalise. As raised by Costa and Lopes (2015;36), who analysed Lisbon's urban policy at the time, 'when public policies (in this case Lisbon's City Council - CML) attempt to institutionalize [street art], doubts naturally emerge.' This is, as suggested by the two researchers, likely due to the fact that street artists are by nature transgressive, and rely on the inability of authorities to control them to exist artistically. Any policies seeking to integrate street art into urban development have long remained alternative, and fraught with challenges, as the case of Lisbon demonstrates (Costa & Lopes, 2015).

The Saint-Nazaire landmarks, while falling to an extent under the category of street art given their open-air art nature, are different in scale and would never have happened if not for the copyright owner and the city's approval. In fact, Jean-Claude Chemin explains that none of the landmarks would have gone past the drawing board had they not been approved by the copyright owner, and any authorities required, which makes perfect sense given the nature and scale of the project. While street art, in the form of graffiti notably, often parodies or caricatures existing copyrighted material and individuals such as politicians, *Les 7 Soleils* wanted the project to be legitimate in every possible way, and went through the necessary steps to ensure that it were the case (Bréus & Chemin, 2017). Over the course of the exchanges with individuals having taken part in the project, the researched found striking the regular use of the idea of respect regarding the original material. Traditional street art, while not inherently incompatible with homages, tends to lean towards caricature and parody (Costa & Lopes, 2015).

Conventions between all parties

The details of the certification and rubber stamping required to create the trail have been discussed in earlier sections to an extent, but this next paragraph will aim to address the details of the agreement between all involved parties.

From earlier conversations with the president of *Les 7 Soleils* and articles, the researcher already knew that a delegation of members of the association went to Belgium with what they felt was a solid project. They obtained the agreement from Fanny Remi (now Rodwell) and made the proposal to the city from there. Two of the key conventions that helped the trail come to life were shared by the president of the association with the researcher. While these are theoretically accessible to any citizen of the European Union, direct access to these has proven an invaluable asset in the understanding of this literary trail.

The first convention involves the following two parties: Moulinsart SA (the copyright owners) and the ASBL *Les 7 Soleils* (ASBL : non-profit association). It initially spanned a period of 10 years and has been tacitly renewed since as per article 2.2. It confirms that the right of use has been granted to the association free of charge ('à titre gracieux'), while the funding of the project itself would be left to the association. This same preamble to the convention confirms that funding would be articulated around three axes: European funds, public funds, and sponsoring funds (which would have been pre-approved by the copyright owners). While not explicitly mentioned in the

convention, the association sought local sponsors as a priority, as a means to highlight the port activities and reinforce the connection between Tintin and Saint-Nazaire.

The convention itself discusses each party's obligations, as well as the nature of the collaboration, insisting on the fact that Moulinsart SA would play a part in the design of the trail and provide technical support for its creation as well as quality control. Moulinsart SA committed in these conventions to ensuring and controlling that the panels would be durable, and as accurate as possible in terms of design and colour to Hergé's work. The conventions highlight in several instances that no commercial use is to be made of this literary trail (either by the association or its sponsors), and *Les 7 Soleils*' duties of transparency towards the copyright owners. It states that if and when the exhibition of the enamelled steel panels ends, these are to be returned to the Hergé Foundation in Belgium by *Les 7 Soleils* free of charge. It is useful to note that this obligation was directly transferred to the city of Saint-Nazaire in the next convention the association contracted with the city, alongside with several others.

As far as regulation as a whole is concerned, it is obvious upon reading both conventions that the copyright owner has a final say in every instance, in the sense where the original artwork is their property and as such, no use can be made of it without their explicit agreement. Such terms make sense in the context of intellectual property, and the fact that the conventions were tacitly renewed indicates that the copyright owner's trust has remained intact, which Nick Rodwell has since confirmed over the course of an email exchange with the researcher cited in an earlier section.

Upkeep of the trail

Article 7.1 of the convention between Moulinsart SA and *Les 7 Soleils* tackles the concept of upkeep. While few degradations and deteriorations did occur over the lifespan of the trail, the situation had been anticipated by the convention. Should any of the landmarks be deteriorated, naturally or intentionally, a responsibility to act within 15 days was agreed in the legally binding document: this obligation was transferred to the city of Saint-Nazaire, which has so far complied with these terms although a few reminders were required. Jean-Claude Chemin is, as president of the association and founder of the trail, committed to its continued existence and has contacted the city himself whenever upkeep works were required – citing the convention as a reminder whenever required (Bréus & Chemin, 2018).

Saint-Nazaire being a shipyard and a coastal city, landmarks are naturally exposed to birds and their dejections, which means part of the landmarks have to be cleaned several times a year. On a human level, stickers and graffiti were occasionally placed on the landmarks, but were swiftly removed whenever this occurred. Given the quality of steel used and the way the metal was treated, upkeep is meant to be relatively affordable as panels were built to last, with quality in mind from the very beginning – graffiti are therefore relatively harmless to the literary trail in practice, not that such attempts occurred more than a couple of times over several decades.

This demonstrates how having a clear agreement between all parties involved has allowed the trail to be protected from external intervention, be it natural or intentional damage. It is obvious to the researcher that it is in the copyright owner's interest but also the association's and the city of Saint-Nazaire's to keep the trail in a healthy state, since it indirectly represents Hergé's work, Tintin, the city, and their connection.

Image regulation

As no commercial use of the trail is allowed as per the two aforementioned conventions, this means that the trail cannot be featured in postcards, for example, which might initially seem odd. This is obviously due to copyright reasons, and the fact that the whole trail is designed as an homage, from which no one should financially profit. However, individuals are perfectly allowed to take their own pictures of the Saint-Nazaire landmarks, meaning a tourist would be allowed to take a picture of them in front of said landmarks. Given the increased importance of selfie, or autophotography, as a form of cultural expression over the last few decades, the tourist therefore has access to a means of sharing their own personal experience of the literary trail (Gunthert, 2015). While pictures of the unusual or extraordinary have long served tourists as a means of demarcating themselves from mundane, ordinary life (Urry, 1990, cited in Dinhopl and Gretzel, 2016), recent years have seen a development in the way tourist gaze evolved since the boom of social media and smartphones. Access given to tourists through this literary trail meets the expectations of a modern tourism experience, where one can connect to family and friends who stayed at home instantaneously and share their pictures, selfies, experiences and comments in a matter of seconds (Larsen et al., 2006).

IDENTITY

As a concept, identity could in a way encompass the whole of the literary trail. Indeed, ideas relating to identity have been evoked as early as the first section of this research – such as the history of the city having played an indirect part in the production of the trail, for example. Yet several key items relating to identity remain to be discussed, such as localisation, and pre-requisites for enjoyment. Production, Consumption and Regulation are three of the five moments in the circuit of culture, which were discussed in earlier sections. As far as identity is concerned, the fact is that makers of this literary trail all had this in common that they were either Tintin enthusiasts, or saw an interest in putting the Tintin/Saint-Nazaire connection in the spotlight. This is, for example, the case of the former Saint-Nazaire mayor who, while not a tintinophile himself, came to see the potential of this literary trail and how it could add to the broader project of the PDG (Projet de Développement Global –global development project, later to be renamed PGD) for Saint-Nazaire, and the revival of the port area. The case of sponsors and external funding having been discussed more thoroughly in an earlier section, these will be omitted from this component in order to avoid unnecessary repetition.

Touristic appeal of the trail

Literary tourism in itself indirectly creates wealth through a form of free publicity, as does movie-induced tourism. This was notably documented by Busby and Klug (2001) using the case of Notting Hill-based tourism, who also defined cultural tourism as ‘one of the fastest-growing areas of tourism, representing an area of significant economic benefit’ (2001; 321).

In this paper, the author identified key reasons for which a tourist may be interested in visiting a literary place, or a movie location. Several of these motives are directly relevant to the Saint-Nazaire literary trail, among which ‘to follow in the footsteps of their favourite actor/actress’, or ‘to visit properties purely for their historic significance after seeing a film, eg. Hever Castle in *Anne of a Thousand Days*’ (2001; 324). As these key reasons were directly referring to film, it is a given that the theory developed cannot possibly perfectly match a comic book-based tourist’s interest; however, it would be absurd not to highlight the similarities between both types of tourists. Indeed, both have this in common that they are practising a form of cultural tourism (arguably a pleonasm), and share an interest in fictitious characters having visited an actual place, one way or another. Tintin and Haddock are hardly ‘actors’, yet enthusiasts will gladly follow in their footsteps all the same. Similarly, the city of Saint-Nazaire and its port in particular are no ‘property’, yet the spirit depicted by Hergé in his work remains present and tangible to an individual displaying some curiosity about history, and a dash of imagination.

Target audience and enjoyment of the trail

A literary trail is not designed for the enjoyment of its makers alone, although they are likely to be personally invested in it. Who was this specific trail designed for?

The two obvious target audience categories seem to be Tintin fans and Nazairen people- and possibly even more so people from both groups, since these are not mutually exclusive. But where does this appeal reside? To a lover of Tintin books, being able to '[follow] in the footsteps of' Tintin and Haddock (Vangénéberg, 2015) is bound to be an enriching experience. While these characters travelled the world and have visited many actual cities, Saint-Nazaire is the only one to have developed this connection to that extent, and created a physical literary trail. In a field that may seem unrelated to start with, Westover (2012) discussed the specific appeal of what he defined as 'Necromanticism' (2012; 1), the idea of travelling to meet dead poets or writers, more specifically from the Romantic movement. In the context of the Saint-Nazaire literary trail, the characters are far from dead, but as they are fictitious they have this in common with the deceased that they cannot be met in person, and have once stopped (in literature) by the city, years before the tourist. Tintin fans visiting Saint-Nazaire in 2020 have to be aware of this fact, and can appreciate their visit all the more that they can see how the city has evolved since it was depicted by Hergé in 1946. It goes without saying that in this context, imagination also plays a key role in the enjoyment of the place by a tourist. One can therefore partly confirm the earlier hypothesis (formulated under the 'comics literacy' section of the literature review) according to which detailed knowledge of the source material and the history behind it can help provide a deeper degree of understanding to a literary tourist, without it necessarily harming the enjoyment of others.

Without going as far as Tintin enthusiasts alone, the character and his adventures hold a form of universal appeal, which means that the trail can speak, in a sense, to a great number (Algoud, 2016). This has further been discussed under the "consumption" section, and is worth remembering since Hergé's creation has a broad audience which directly impacts on the trail.

Translation

While other translations of *Les 7 boules de cristal* (Hergé, 1948) leave the name of the city as 'Saint-Nazaire', it is important to mention that the British translation by Leslie Lonsdale-Cooper and Michael Turner feature the name of 'Westermouth' in its stead (Hergé, 1962; 54).

This translation method, called adaptation, consists in replacing a term or series of terms with another, more suited or understandable to the end reader, notably as a means to take cultural differences into account. Adaptation can sometimes be made at the cost of authenticity, and has been qualified as the 'extreme limit of translation'

by Chuquet and Paillard (1989; 10), who studied translation issues between French and English from a linguistic approach.

This choice to adapt Saint-Nazaire into Westermouth is likely an attempt to make the city seem less foreign to a British reader, in the sense where the word 'Nazaire' would be a puzzling one to say out loud without any guidance, particularly due to different pronunciations between French and English as far as vowels are concerned. In addition, this change features the suffix '-mouth', already present in cities such as Plymouth -which is quite literally the mouth of river Plym, its estuary. Westermouth therefore conveys the idea of a city by the sea, most likely on the Western coast of a country which is not directly mentioned as France. The city of La Rochelle has similarly been adapted into 'Bridgeport' (Hergé, 1962;59) by Lonsdale-Cooper and Turner, since La Rochelle is famous both for its port...and, as of 1988, decades after the translation, its bridge connecting it to the Île de Ré, which happens to be the second longest bridge in France after Saint-Nazaire's. The 'bridge' aspect turned out to be a fitting coincidence in retrospect.

Both adaptations, while understandable at the time of the original translation, have the direct effect of removing the names of Saint-Nazaire and La Rochelle from the book altogether. This means that unless they have later read the original version, or are extremely well informed about Hergé's work and Tintin in particular, British readers are unlikely to realise the connection between Tintin and Saint-Nazaire, or to purposefully visit the city as literary tourists. While any Spanish, Italian, German tourists may easily make the connection if they have read the Tintin books recently, English readers may find the meaning of this trail to be lost in translation.



Figure 15: Photograph of the main entrance to the city of Saint-Nazaire (which in the English translation became Westermouth), and the enamelled steel Tintin panel that greets visitors to the city (Bréus, 2018)

Pre-requisites to the enjoyment of the trail

Taking these facts regarding localisation into account, the researcher naturally reached the point where they should discuss the pre-requisites to appreciate the trail. Are there any things that one should know prior to experiencing the trail to enjoy it?

Tintin is very much a part of French popular culture, and chances are most individuals know the character, without necessarily having read every single one of his adventures. There is a generational component to it in the sense where these stories were published last century, and individuals having grown up reading them may feel a different type of attachment to them. One can however argue that these comics are to an extent part of intangible cultural heritage, passed on from parent to children, and remain a popular early read in many a family (Giesbert in Hurbain, 2011;5). Additionally, events such as the production of a television series by the Ellipse studios in the 1990s have helped keep interest in the series alive, and given important boosts to Tintin comic book sales at the time: indeed, about 3 million albums were sold the year the series was released (De Saint Vincent, in Bernière, 2017;94). This helped mitigate, in part, the fact that sales were (like any series having stopped) progressively decreasing over time.

While the researcher could not find any such figures as far as the more recent Steven Spielberg 2011 film adaptation is concerned, it is likely that media coverage in France in particular helped boost Tintin exposure again, alongside sales. For all these reasons, it remains safe to assume that a majority of French individuals remains, to this date, somehow familiar with Tintin, and at the very least able to correctly identify key characters from the series such as Captain Haddock and Tintin himself. Similarly, Hergé's style is so recognisable that even the panel by the Penhoët entrance to the city not displaying these famous characters is likely to be identified as coming from these stories.

Does that mean that one necessarily must know Tintin or have read *Les 7 boules de cristal* in particular to be able to enjoy the literary trail? Anyone able to appreciate art is in theory able to draw pleasure or satisfaction from the sight of the landmarks laid by the association. It does not mean art speaks to everyone or that every individual is bound to enjoy it, but the very ability to enjoy art for the sake of art can be sufficient to appreciate these landmarks, even without prior knowledge about Tintin or the city of Saint-Nazaire. Jean-Claude Chemin openly admits that the goal was not to target a specific audience, but to be open to all. In the second interview with the researcher (Bréus & Chemin, 2018), he argues that the exhibitions (notably *Tintin, Haddock et les bateaux*, which was later adapted into a book), were designed so it would be easy for three generations of one family to attend (Bréus & Chemin, 2018). Grandparents having, in the case of Nazairien people, likely worked in or for the shipyard, would enjoy the technical and historical aspect that connected to their own personal history. Parents would enjoy a mix of both history and comics, having most likely grown reading these, while children would appreciate the more playful aspects of the

exhibition (cartoon excerpts, big comics-based figures, etc.). To an extent, this broad target audience matches the motto of the late *Journal Tintin* (1946-1988), which was 'the journal of the youth, from 7 to 77 years old' (referenced in Royant, 2017;1). To a larger extent, this matches Tintin himself, whose adventures were always as open as possible, and can be understood and appreciated regardless of one's personal knowledge of the times or places depicted. Hergé always made a point to create somewhat relatable and involving stories regardless of context and exoticism: each page was initially designed as a cliffhanger of sorts so that the reader remains involved, a method undoubtedly due to Tintin's original method of publication as a serialised story in *Le Petit Vingtième* (Goddin, 2007).

Does the trail create outsiders?

The cultural object under study is in no way designed to separate people into two groups or create outsiders, but does have a connection to identity. It is doubtful anyone would feel excluded, though, as in the original story Saint-Nazaire is effectively a brief stop – the literary trail has expanded on it and, one could easily argue, strengthened the identity of the place as depicted by Hergé.

As discussed above, not all art speaks to everyone. However, the Saint-Nazaire landmarks do not exclude anyone by default, since they feature fictitious characters in a context that is no longer current, and would therefore not be experienced directly by anyone. The artwork can however be appreciated on more than one level. At its core, it remains graphic and can therefore be appreciated due to the fact it was designed to be pleasing to the eye in the first place, even in the context of its original comics. Hergé had training as a publicist and could have had a career in this field alone had he not continued with the bande-dessinée (Peeters, 2010) – this notably shows in his masterful use of vibrant colours and clear lines, which hold a form of universal appeal. No previous knowledge of Tintin is required to appreciate it, just the way no previous knowledge of an artist or their work is mandatory in order to be able to appreciate their artwork, their writing, or their music. Jean-Claude Chemin even argues that art 'consumption' does not use up any resources, the way classic consumption does, but in fact creates wealth, in the sense where enjoyment is produced at no cost for the viewer, and can be shared with others (Bréus & Chemin, 2017: 6:20). This fully agrees with Hall's idea of culture as an ensemble of shared meanings, a form of implicit exchange. A literary trail's shared meaning is indeed deeply connected to the concept of identity, be that of a location, an individual or a character.

It is however useful to mention that the adventures of Tintin are not entirely exempt from all controversy. The most infamous Tintin book in that regard is without a doubt *Tintin au Congo* (Hergé, 1931), which was a clear product of its time and conveyed a

paternalistic, colonialist view of a country the author had never visited. Said book has, even half a century after it was published, sparked some debate, although this remains a marginal controversy since Hergé actively exposed racism in many of his books, notably as early as *Le Lotus bleu* (Hergé, 1936, 1946 for the colour edition), and later described the aforementioned Congo episode as ‘done very lightly’, and in a ‘paternalistic spirit, which was common at the time in Belgium’ (Sadoul, 2000 and Couvreur & De Kuyssche, 2010). Hergé later referred to this book several times, clarifying both the fact that he would [re]do it very differently, and had at the time relied on the view of colonialists coming back from what was the Belgian Congo- it is apparent that the author had no racist intention even at the time of writing. As far as political views are concerned, Tintin himself is not connected to any ideology in particular, and as a character conveys optimistic, humanist values without being associated with any political party or ideology –in spite of a few short-lived (and never approved by the copyright owner) attempts at political exploitation by some parties, discussed more at length in Algoud (2016; 663-665). It is worth noting that comics are, like any form of art, a means for some to convey a message – a message which can be of a political nature. American superhero comics are often criticised as being a form of American propaganda, and such comics were objectively active propaganda notably during the war years – so much that a wide range of American superheroes were depicted directly fighting the Nazis and often Hitler himself (Witek, 1989). Some other fictitious characters such as Donald Duck would take an opposite stance, and be featured implicitly ridiculing the U.S. military and the gap between promises made before drafting and the reality of the war- not unlike what the band Status Quo would do in 1986 with their title *In the army now*.

Overall, it would be counter-productive and dishonest not to acknowledge that comics can convey ideology, and therefore propaganda material. Tintin was initially to convey the traditional Catholic values of the newspaper he fictitiously worked for, as per the wishes of Abbé Norbert Wallez (1882-1952), who was the editor of *Le Vingtième Siècle*, the newspaper Hergé worked for. While remaining close to Wallez, who was an important figure in his life, Hergé did progressively gain and claim more independence, and his creation distanced itself from some of the initial constraints over time. It is obviously complex to briefly summarise a process that happened over several decades, but it is a fact that the character of Tintin has developed over the years, retaining a humanist view of the world while conveying universal and relatively apolitical values⁸ (Algoud, 2016).

⁸ One could argue that values of tolerance, for example, are in fact political. While the researcher agrees with that idea in principle, he would argue for the sake of this thesis that values of tolerance cannot ideologically be connected to a single ideology or party.

Do the Saint-Nazaire landmarks exclude anyone or directly convey any of the occasionally controversial aspects of Hergé's work? *Les 7 Boules de Cristal* (1948) did not raise any such concerns, either at the time of publishing or later on. The diptych this book makes with *Le Temple du Soleil* as a whole contains a few inaccuracies regarding Inca culture, which in all fairness are more likely due to a lack of available information at the time, and have not sparked any controversy. As profusely documented by Goddin (2014ab), Algoud (2016) and many others, Hergé often used library and museum-based resources to inform his storytelling and his art, but also took some creative liberties when he felt these would help with the story, or for the sake of aesthetics. Goddin (2014,a) notably demonstrated that the author had initially drawn the Inca mummy Rascar Capac as (accurately) devoid of hair as per his documentation, then later decided to add it, possibly for a more striking visual effect – as depicted in Figure 15.



Figure 16: Rascar Capac (Hergé, 1948 in Goddin, 2014)

Such creative liberties do not detract from the fact that Hergé was renowned for his substantial research work as far as history, geography and biology were concerned, at least comparatively to other comic book artists at the time (Algoud, 2016). He notably used library resources, museums and *Le Nouveau Larousse Illustré* (an illustrated French encyclopedia) for information and visual reference (Goddin, 2014ab), and often had his collaborators pose for visually accurate anatomical depiction. Any 'mistakes' regarding Inca culture in the diptych *Les 7 boules de cristal/ Le temple du Soleil* are not due to ill-informed conceptions, but more so to inaccuracies in documentation or conscious artistic choices, neither of which sparked any controversy at the time or since. Moreover, none of these are actually featured in the landmarks from the Saint-Nazaire trail in any case. In the sense where Hergé relied on such precise information (as precise as it could be at the time in any case), he as an author could be likened to Jules Verne, who used available documentation to inform his writing and often aimed to indirectly educate the reader through his exotic stories, occasionally using history to further the plot such as in *Le Tour du Monde en 80 jours* (1872; 61).

Blurring the lines between fiction and reality

Another component of the Nazairien homage is that Tintin is, both in fiction and in the real world, a famous reporter. In the real world, upon coming back from the USSR in 1930, he was greeted in person at the train station by many Belgian fans who had been following his adventures. This was in fact a publicity stunt: a young boy disguised as Tintin was hired to play the part, and the fact that this initiative proved to be such a success helped anchor Tintin's growing popularity in spite of him being a relatively young creation at the time (Algoud, 2016). Such a stunt would later be renewed with similar success (Goddin, 2018).

In the series created by Hergé, Tintin is quite famous, too – as much as a reporter could be in the real world in any case. While he is a reporter in title, he writes very few articles, but is clearly quite renowned and sometimes gets identified, to the point where he occasionally has to work in disguise. He gets interviewed on several occasions, too, and local populations are often seen celebrating his arrival or success, or giving him a fond farewell depending on the situation. These bridges between fiction and reality are broadened by the existence of the Saint-Nazaire literary trail. The character, while fictitious, is celebrated by the town he once visited, which is far from being a random homage and gives a vibrant echo to his adventures. This further helps blur the lines between fiction and reality, a blur which tourists often praise as a means to revisit the past while walking in the footsteps of a famous (fictitious) character.

A unique project?

Finally, there is something to be said about the uniqueness of this literary trail. While the use of social media such as Facebook as a research tool would normally be frowned upon, in that specific occasion it served to reach a wealth of highly knowledgeable individuals having a passion for comics from all over the world. The Comic Book Historian group (2018) defines itself as follows:

‘This group is devoted to the history of Comic Books and to be a meeting place for Comic Book Historians with an appreciation for comic art, history and behind the scenes knowledge of what exactly happened to create the strips & comics that we all know and love. This is not a fan page, but rather a place for researchers and journalists who are searching for the truth’.

On 25th July 2018 the researcher posted a message discussing the current case study in this group, in an attempt to inform fellow researchers about the existence of this literary trail, but also as a means to gauge whether any of them knew of such a similar trail anywhere in the world. While it raised positive reactions and did inform some readers about the trail in itself, no individual raised any similarity between the

Nazairien trail and an existing one. A later attempt in August in the same year proved equally fruitless. Such a method for inquiry is obviously limited: the researcher had, prior to this, explored academic literature on comics-based trails, which happened to be extremely limited in itself. Some resources do explore comics-based literary trails, such as Munnukka's *From Transvaal to Dismal Downs – the possibilities of Comic-based tourism* (2001), with a clear focus on analysing the potential of such an enterprise. Indeed, Munnukka comes to the conclusion that comics as a medium have the potential to help shape a destination image for readers, although any representation may induce its own bias, notably by furthering existing stereotypes. Taking all of the above into account, the piece of research discussed focusses on theory and does not analyse or acknowledge any other, similar existing trail to the Saint-Nazaire one, which is why the researcher inquired in the specialist group mentioned earlier in this section, only to confirm the hypothesis that this trail is likely one of a kind at the time of writing.

One of the issues commonly arising with Heritage Tourism is the development of formulas, which will work for a time, until such formulas are repeated in every city which can do so. This was notably illustrated by Hitchcock, Stanley and King Chung (2005), who looked at Folk Cultural Villages and how it might be complex to maintain a local identity over time, although the initial idea precisely was to promote local identity:

‘The danger that they must face is that the actors cease to represent a credible present and become merely mechanical performers of a nationally prescribed culture.’ (Hitchcock, Stanley and King Chung in Corsane, 2005; 337)

As far as identity is concerned, one of the key benefits of the literary trail under study is the fact that it is unique, and therefore provides the city with a similarly unique appeal to tourists with an interest in this specific aspect of cultural heritage. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no such trail (celebrating a comic book character having visited a specific city in the shape of landmarks across it) exists in the world at the time of writing. As Algoud stated, Hergé's work owes part of its success to ‘the constant play between realism and fantasy, between truth and fiction’ (2016; 673). A trail such as the Saint-Nazaire one has a very distinct identity, a very clear reason to be- it simply could not be copied and pasted, transposed to another location without an equally clear rationale for doing so, thereby preventing it from losing in interest by becoming part of an over-used formula.

REPRESENTATION

Representation as a topic deals with the different possible interpretations of the work produced. More specifically, the concept of representation features both the concept of signifier and signified. The signifier is to do with the raw data, the physical side of the literary trail in the context of this case study. The panels themselves, the Orientation table, are all part of this signifier. To an extent, it also encompasses the brochures advertising the trail, since they indicate the existence of the trail in a physical manner. Both the panels and the brochures have been discussed, though, and this sub-section will particularly focus on the signified, which has not been addressed as much up to this point.

On the meaning of the trail

The 'signified' is much more complex to assess: what is meant by the trail, what is signified by it? To whom? This second aspect has notably been illustrated by Mr Fréneau, from *Le Grand Port Maritime de Nantes / Saint-Nazaire* (one of the sponsors of the trail cited under *Production*). Over the course of the recorded interview with the researcher, he explained that in his eyes, art featuring Tintin artwork by Hergé is bound to indirectly, implicitly convey the values conveyed within the adventures of Tintin. In his eyes, the trail is likeable by nature, and 'makes sense' in more than one way. One could argue that it also 'creates meaning', beyond the fact that Hergé's work alone contains several layers of understanding. One still has to identify which values are conveyed exactly; Giesbert (in Hurbain, 2011; 5) argues that Tintin is a 'universal character', an 'avatar of the eternal human being'. He further elaborates that his adventures were translated in a hundred languages, and Tintin will still be known in centuries, the same way Ulysses and Hamlet are today. Hergé himself stated on several occasions how children from various countries, ethnicities and ages identified with Tintin, regardless of physical likeness, which adds to the idea that the character is, to a reader, far more than his physical appearance. Reproductions of panels featuring Tintin characters signify, as such, more than a single moment in a comic book, but also convey the values a reader would normally associate with the character. Mr Fréneau's point on the trail naturally supporting the values carried by the character does indeed seem like a logical one to make.

Yet, in spite of this connection between Tintin and the city, the port technically used as a model by Hergé is not Saint-Nazaire itself, but more likely Anvers (Horeau, 1999). Is that relevant to a tourist visiting the city? Not in the slightest: to a reader, the city depicted is Saint-Nazaire. Not only because the reader is told so, but also because Hergé knew that nothing looked more like a European port than another European port: his depiction was plausible, likely. French poetess Elsa Triolet's (Triolet, 1969)

view that the reader is, on an even level with the author, the main character of a book adds to this idea of an input from the reader: Hergé drew Anvers, depicted it as Saint-Nazaire, and the reader made it so. That imaginary depiction of Saint-Nazaire became factual, so much that some tourists traveling to the city were convinced the landmarks were placed exactly where Tintin and Haddock were, as demonstrated above. The signified also encompasses the intent behind the trail: the idea of commemorating the existence of a connection between Tintin and Saint-Nazaire, most of all.

Location choice and its meaning

As public works of art, these landmarks have been placed in locations that were deemed close to the original work or matching the general settings at the time. The port area and the docks, the main entrances to the city, were picked as locations given their connections both to the original story by Hergé and the city's history. The case of the Penhoët-based sign is a good example of this: the arrival panel featuring the 'Saint-Nazaire' sign was placed rue des Chantiers, by the city's former main entrance. Most workers going to work at the shipyard would have, at the time, arrived to work through this street. This is particularly interesting, as the initial drawing did not mention Saint-Nazaire, although it featured a typically French cigar-like sign used by Newsagents/Bureaux de tabac, locating the place somewhere in France rather than Belgium, as initially planned (Goddin, 2014a). Saint-Nazaire was a late pick as a destination: the road featured in Hergé's panel could be from any port in France, yet several Nazairiens identified it as the very street in which the landmark was placed (Bréus & Chemin, 2017). The context of the artwork and the cultural object, the surrounding areas, have over time come to add to it. While all landmarks were strategically placed, as discussed, their meaning has expanded through the existence of the literary trail.

The urban space has however changed over time. The last two port cranes that were located by the submarine base, and used to stand behind the related sign, have been removed since the landmark was placed, without anyone informing *Les 7 Soleils*. Mr Chemin admits that if he had known about this plan for a removal, he would have tried to have at least one crane remain, as a reminder of this past and so the analogy with Hergé's work visually lives on more strongly (Bréus & Chemin, 2018).



Figure 17: Photograph of a panel featuring transport rails formerly used on the docks (Bréus, 2017)

In that regard, one might say that the trail has evolved somewhat in spite of its creators' intentions, although the landmark remains located near where the scene depicted would have originally taken place. The rails which were once in use in the area do remain, however, and do not look unlike Hergé's drawing. As such, one could argue that the overall spirit and inspiration still remain to date.



Figure 18: Photograph of old transport rails located next to the landmark featured above (Bréus, 2017)

The choice of location having more to do with the overall feeling of a place than it had to do with geographical accuracy, the fact that the city around the landmarks is a living, evolving entity does not detract from the trail's intent – which partly relies on the power of imagination in the first place. Some panels rely on a more visual analogy between the landmark and its surroundings, but a majority of them are more to do with the general spirit of the place, an obviously very subjective concept which will therefore be perceived differently by tourists on a personal basis. This potential gap in interpretation will be assessed and analysed in a later section within this heading, under 'Assessing tourist experiences and feelings'.

Language and tone

A question remains about the language and tone of the landmarks. What sort of feelings do they convey, and how so? As copies of panels from the Tintin adventures, these do contain text which may seem out of place in the context, with the exception of maybe three of them: the two panels at the entrances of the city, and the silent, submarine base one in which Tintin is depicted running towards a cruise liner. However, the visual remains by far the most important part of each picture.

Feelings sparked by a work of art featuring artwork from another source (in the case, giant enamelled steel panels featuring comic book art) are bound to be connected to the original artwork, itself. All panels are geographically isolated from each other, which effectively means that their individual value is strengthened.

While some panels are more comedic in nature, such as the one featuring Captain Haddock being lifted by a crane (above), to the surprise of Tintin, others seem darker in tone. This has to do with the overall tone of the story by Hergé, and the fact that Tintin and Haddock are not in Saint-Nazaire for leisure purposes: they are looking for a kidnapped friend, and there is a sense of urgency to their journey: they are tracking down criminals who may wish to harm their friend Calculus, as they have harmed other scientists earlier in the story (Goddin, 2014). In fact, one of the panels clearly depicts captain Haddock telling Tintin that they have made very little progress in the end, while another has him ponder about where his lost friend might be, worrying for his safety.

Since panels are isolated from each other rather than side by side, a viewer can focus on the overall feel rather than the specific situation depicted. Later panels such as the one photographed opposite (Bréus, 2018) feature a small map in the bottom left corner, which may in turn incentivise people to learn more about the city's history, or to try and locate the other landmarks. These later panels provide information in several languages and 'invite the reader to walk in the footsteps of Tintin' more directly. (Bréus & Chemin, 2018; 2:30).



Figure 19: Photograph of a Saint-Nazaire landmark featuring a city map (Bréus, 2018)

That relative isolation of panels from one another results in a stronger focus on the visual, which is meant to depict the city and more specifically its port area – the docks and the dockyard. Characteristics of the city, be they real or attributed by the viewer, are reinforced by this visual proximity. To a well-informed viewer, some emotions and feelings can be triggered by the location of the landmarks within the city, notably as a reminder of its historical past. This can be the case of the Penhoët panel, placed by the former main entrance to the city in the 19th, and early 20th Century, which some workers still go through as a means to get to their work at the shipyard. The tone of the panels is clearly that of an homage: their sheer scale clearly highlights them as individual works of art, and their location was picked, as discussed earlier, so a connection can naturally be made by the viewer between reality and fiction.

A linear journey?

Landmarks can be found in a variety of places, and chances are most people from Saint-Nazaire have not seen them all, unless they actively looked out for them. One

could therefore ask about the structure of the trail. Given the above assumption, a logical hypothesis would be that it is very hard to miss a landmark, yet equally difficult to see all, since there is no recommended itinerary of any kind: any tourists would have to draft their own. There is a clear intent not to take the tourist by the hand, and to let them explore at their leisure. It is easy enough to find out where the landmarks are located, as these are present on the most widely distributed free map of the city, yet it requires a conscious move on the tourist's part. Jean-Claude Chemin agreed with the above analysis himself, stating that the landmarks were not specifically designed around a linear journey (Bréus and Chemin, 2018). These are however structured around a clear theme, and a logical connection between location and original work.



Figure 20: . Photograph of a Tintin mural based in Brussels (Gattegno in Hurbain, 2011)

Another question worth asking is what type of conventions the trail works with. Does it match the genre expectations, alter them, live up to them? As discussed in an earlier section, the landmarks bear similarity with street art as a general concept, in the sense that they are public works of art available for all to see within an urban space, free of charge. They are no longer 'simply' panels from a bande dessinée, but individual works of art which, while connected to each other, can individually be viewed as such. The Nazairien trail does differ from artistic depictions of character in a specific location as these do not necessarily match the concept of a literary trail: Murals can be used as a means to celebrate a writer or their characters, and Tintin himself can be found pictured on several walls in his (virtual) hometown of Brussels, Belgium. These are however not part of a literary trail in the sense where they are completely disconnected from each other, and do not necessarily depict Tintin in Brussels. The photograph above (Figure 19) is an example of this, depicting a mural located near Brussels' Grand'Place, which was inaugurated on the occasion of the centenary of Hergé's birth (Gattegno in Hurbain, 2011). The connection between original work and place is present (Tintin as a character lives in Brussels), but remains relatively slim: tourists are not so much walking in the footsteps of Tintin as being reminded that the young reporter is from Brussels, and the homage is more general.

Assessing tourist experience and feelings

This is probably the most difficult question: how to gauge what people experience. Being originally from Saint-Nazaire, the researcher has, as stated earlier, refrained from letting personal bias interfere, and has not used any personal resources from

individuals the researcher personally knew before beginning this research, as these could be equally biased. Another issue with collecting feedback is that there is no reliable institution gathering such feedback. The head of the Saint-Nazaire tourist office, when asked by email, had the following answer regarding tourist feedback: 'Malheureusement je n'ai pas de réponse à cette question. Nous n'avons jamais récolté ce genre de retours, et je n'ai pas connaissance d'un livre d'or qui existerait quelque part. Certes on peut entendre des choses comme « oh regarde, c'est chouette »... mais ce n'est pas très scientifique ;-) Désolée !'⁹

Staying in front of the panels with a questionnaire would not be a productive method of collecting feedback either. As discussed under the Consumption section, landmarks are, collectively, viewed by thousands of people a day, but few actually stop, and one could virtually spend days in front of a specific landmark without anyone being willing to answer questions, given how little time one spends looking at the art on average. Taking all of these elements into account, a decision was made to use feedback from individuals who willingly shared their view and impressions on the literary trail in the first place: bloggers living in the city, travel bloggers visiting Saint-Nazaire, and Tintin enthusiasts having come across the trail. These is in no way objective assessments; Information shared on blogs does not attempt to pass as objective, and in the post-consumption age, travel blogging has become a common way for tourists to share their experiences, but also remember, and even enrich them (Pan, MacLaurin & Crotts, 2007). Similarly, travel blog data and feedback analysis has been acknowledged as an invaluable tool for DMOs to put forward the key assets of destinations in their communication for over a decade, making use of netnography to improve services based on customer satisfaction (Guo, Barnes & Jia, 2017)

Using unprompted feedback on the landmarks is also a means to cancel out bias that would potentially be introduced by formatted questions designed by an interviewer. The feedback isolated and presented in Appendix A was analysed through a simplified version of gerund coding, focussing on the semantic field of emotion. Gerund coding as a tool is particularly helpful to prevent early theory formation (Ellis, Wojnar & Pettinato, 2014), and helped isolate recurring concepts in unprompted tourist feedback. Sources have been suitably anonymised given the unprompted nature of the feedback collected, and the focus was placed on implications made regarding the trail, be it in relation to the city, the original artwork, or their links. The table was attached to this thesis as Appendix A.

Excerpts used for this analysis reveal several trends. First of all, a great majority of individuals (7 out of 11) either mention or praise the fact that the trail highlights and

⁹ 'Unfortunately I do not have an answer to this question. We never collected that type of feedback, and I am not aware of any comments book (on the topic) anywhere. Granted, we can hear things such as "oh, look, that's cool"... but that does not exactly qualify as scientific! ;-)
Sorry!'

deepens links between reality and fiction. While each individual refers to this in their own words, it is by far the strongest trend in all analysed feedback, so much so that no other theme comes close in terms of frequency. Three individuals praise the trail for reviving a part of local identity, two of them consider it to be an invitation to travelling, two of them praise the spirit of adventure it conveys while another insists on the universal appeal of the trail... Feedback on the trail in itself is overwhelmingly positive, with every sampled tourist referring to it in laudatory terms. The one criticism pointed out by a tourist is the fact that some landmarks may not be as accessible as others on foot or other sustainable modes of transport. This initially seemed odd to the researcher as all landmarks are technically accessible on foot and none require going up any stairs or in any lifts, for example – they are all technically equally accessible and always have been. A hypothesis the researcher formulated is that the individual is referring to how far apart some landmarks are from each other, which does make it potentially complex to see them all on foot in a short period of time, although that was arguably never the intent of the trail. This potential difficulty in seeing it all shortly is in part due to the fact that two landmarks are further away from the others as they were placed by the city's main entry roads (original and recent), as a means to greet visitors entering the city.

Among positive aspects within tourist feedback, links between the Tintin comics and the history of Saint-Nazaire are clearly strong, so strong in fact that they are experienced by some more accurately than technically possible. Indeed, two tourists stated that the landmarks were located exactly where Tintin would have been, which is factually impossible (Hergé never drew Saint-Nazaire on the basis of pictures from the city) but has the merit of further highlighting this strong sense of reality conveyed by the pictures, and the choice of their location. Over the course of his research, the researcher has also met several individuals stating that they recognised a specific street, the most prominent one being the Rue des Chantiers depicted on Figure 21 (Hergé, 1948), although Hergé never used a picture of the street in question either.



Figure 21: Excerpt of the image depicting the arrival of Tintin, Haddock and Snowy in Saint-Nazaire (Hergé, 1948)

On the occasion of the *Monde de Tintin* exhibition that took place between December 1992 and January 1993 in Saint-Nazaire and created by Philippe Goddin, several articles were written about Tintin in Saint-Nazaire. One of these articles, written by Gautier (1992), provides a valuable and picturesque insight into the way the city depicted in Hergé's work is perceived by people who work there. Dockers and sailors having worked in the area interpret pictures in their own way – one stating having likely worked on one of the boats depicted, another recognising a chimney, or referring to a wharf by name. In the researcher's opinion, this beautifully illustrates what Mr Chemin referred to on the *7 Soleils* website (2019) as the trail being a form of meeting between imagination and reality. Hergé's usual attention to detail has made the port a likely match for Saint-Nazaire, well beyond simply naming it after the real city: even informed readers will unknowingly add their own meaning to it, their own understanding of the location. This element of subjectivity is specific to art, and can add to the enjoyment of a tourist – the trail favours this free interpretation. What is surprising on the basis of the feedback above is how there seems to be a general consensus on what the trail represents, and therefore on its meaning, regardless of an individual's experience. This in the researcher's opinion is likely due to the fact that the landmarks were located very strategically, so much so that the connection between the existing port and the version of Saint-Nazaire depicted by Hergé in 1946 cannot completely be missed by the viewer of the trail, all experience aside.

What message is the trail conveying?

Such a question is complex in the sense that the message is to do with identity, history, and art all at the same time. The makers of the trail, Tourists and DMOs alike all seem to agree on the fact that the landmarks were designed to highlight an existing connection and reinforce it in a direct, tangible way. This literary trail was created to further anchor the fictional universe of Tintin into the reality of Saint-Nazaire and its history, in the form of an homage. This is the main, direct argument of these landmarks, which can be perceived and understood by many a viewer regardless of their experience of Tintin or the city. Tourist feedback reinforces this idea, a majority of them having clearly responded favourably to that connection and the way these landmarks made it come to life. The overall image of Tintin is an undeniable asset to the city, albeit no direct promotion is made about it as per the conventions signed with Moulinsart SA. The trail inspired by the work of Hergé is still briefly mentioned in a 2011 short film sponsored by Saint-Nazaire designed to introduce the city (Saint-Nazaire, 2011), as a means to highlight its more literary side, and its connection to writers from all over the world. While the trail itself is not described in detail, pictures of it are shown as the voiceover briefly describes the plot of *Les 7 boules de cristal* (Saint-Nazaire, 2011;0:00.39), which shows that the city of Saint-Nazaire and its tourist office are well-aware of the advantages of this connection in terms of destination image.

An ongoing project

The literary trail is considered ongoing, as demonstrated by the recent (2017) addition of a giant sticker at local Seafarers' Center, representing Captain Haddock, Captain Chester, and Tintin – an excerpt from Hergé's *L'étoile mystérieuse* (1942:29) as a means to show sailor friendship and solidarity (Ouest-France, 2017). This addition is not, however, considered a main part of the trail and is more of a friendly nod to the Tintin/Saint-Nazaire relationship. Captain Chester, while physically absent from *Les 7 boules de cristal* (1948), is mentioned in passing and serves as a plot device, taking Tintin and Haddock to La Rochelle to see him while waiting to hear from the Saint-Nazaire police (Hergé, 1946:59). While Chester himself just left La Rochelle, the two protagonists end up finding new information there, which helps them on their quest. Therefore, one could argue that the connection to the trail remains present, at least to a well-informed Tintinophile.



Figure 22: Photograph depicting the Haddock, Chester and Tintin sticker found in the window for the Saint-Nazaire Seafarers' Center- the sticker was funded by Moulinsart SA (Bréus, 2018)

Regular events hosted by *Les 7 Soleils* have included several conferences, public events and exhibitions, notably *Tintin, Haddock et les Bateaux*, which was created in 1999 and experienced great success, to the point where it was henceforth exported to London, Barcelona, Paris, Ostend and Stockholm (Tintin.org). One-off events serve

several purposes, one of which is to ensure that people involved in the political and cultural scene remain aware of the trail and take it into account as appropriate (Bréus & Chemin, 2017b; 3:25). Finally, the landmarks themselves, which could have been claimed by Moulinsart SA, have tacitly remained to date in Saint-Nazaire, as evidence of the respect the city, association and tourists have paid to the work of Hergé through this permanent homage.



Figure 23: Road signs by the Tintin panel, indicating the entrance to the city (Bréus, 2018)

CONCLUSION

CONCEPTUAL CONTRIBUTION

This case study contributed to the field of tintinology by focussing on the one literary trail paying homage to Hergé's characters and analysing its cultural meaning. However, the main objective of this study was to determine to what extent the Circuit of Culture (Hall, Evans and Nixon, 2013) as a pattern was applicable to a comics-based literary trail. The key takeaway of this thesis is that the framework seems fully applicable to such a trail, based on analysis of the Nazairien case. This holistic approach enables a researcher to extract cultural meaning from an otherwise complex, protean cultural object which may greatly evolve over time.

This is particularly relevant since as far as the researcher can tell, there does not seem to be a precedent to such a literary trail based on a comic book character – previous research seems to focus more on the potential of trails based on comic books, more so than on any existing ones (Munnukka, 2010). Indirect or direct homages to Tintin and other characters can be found in their respective hometowns (Gattegno in Hurbain, 2011), and popular comic-book and cartoon characters such as Mickey Mouse are mimicked, replicated and used in street art across the world. However, none of these works, mural or other, directly creates a literary trail per se; individual homages, parodies, series do exist, but there is no way to follow in the footsteps of Lucky Luke, Spider-Man or Mighty Atom, to use examples from three continents, with a support such as the one that was created in Saint-Nazaire. The meaning of the literary trail is not limited to the characters and their adventures, but expands beyond this through the direct involvement of the city itself and its own history (Bréus & Chemin, 2018). Using the circuit of culture as a theoretical framework has allowed cultural meaning to emerge, and highlights that the trail is more than the sum of its parts.

From a conceptual standpoint, this research contributed to highlighting the importance of context in such a specific case study: A literary trail as a cultural object does not simply take an existing meaning and try to copy it; it expands on it and 'makes sense' in the direct sense of the expression, it *creates meaning*, a concept discussed under the Representation heading of this thesis (Bréus & Fréneau, 2018). The Saint-Nazaire trail does so by taking an existing comic book series, and an existing city, and expanding on their connection in a unique way. The trail expands on a short sequence, turning it into an homage to both the past of the shipyard city and the young reporter created by Hergé. Finally, as discussed in Horeau's *Tintin, Haddock et les Bateaux* (1999) and Szafran, Hutin et al.'s *Tintin et la Mer* (2014, pictured on Figure 24), many

a Tintin adventure featured ports and the sea in general, which furthered the connection with the port/shipyard city of Saint-Nazaire through a general theme.

In conclusion, this thesis contributes to identifying the Circuit of Culture as a viable tool to extract deeper cultural meaning when analysing comics-based literary trails. The Circuit of Culture helps one to understand a cultural object from a holistic point of view, acknowledging every component as part of a bigger whole (Hall, Evans and Nixon, 2013). The five components may not all have as much to analyse, on the basis that some are clearly connected to stronger themes in the case of a literary trail. 'Identity' is for example bound to provide more room for analysis than 'Production', but all are components of that greater meaning. Once taken together as a whole, the cultural meaning of the trail emerges: A comics-based literary trail creates meaning beyond what the source material and the location of choice alone could. It anchors a fictitious story into a historical past, and broadens these connections in their own right, providing what can be a vibrant homage to them. While clearly a work of passion, the literary trail created in Saint-Nazaire was, from its inception, a work of rational, well thought-out passion. The researcher would argue that these potentially oxymoronic concepts of reason and passion played a key role in the trail coming to life, and certainly add to its meaning.



Figure 24: Tintin et la mer (cover)
(Szafran, Hutin et al., 2014)

It may be interesting for further research to expand on this concept, and assess to what extent having individuals passionate about the relevant material contribute to a trail affects its development. In the case of the Saint-Nazaire literary trail, it has developed greatly in terms of scale since the initial landmark which was inaugurated in January 1995, yet still follows the purpose that the association *Les 7 Soleils* set itself from the start: 'Perpétuer le souvenir du passage de Tintin, du Capitaine Haddock et de Milou à Saint-Nazaire' (Chemin, 2004)¹⁰.

¹⁰ 'To perpetuate the memory of Tintin, Captain Haddock and Snowy stopping by Saint-Nazaire'

PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION

A comics-based literary trail has the potential to cater to a wide range of audiences: in the case of the Saint-Nazaire trail, it was precisely designed to be enjoyable and enjoyed on more than one level while improving the city's destination image (Bréus & Chemin, 2017). These 'levels' vary from an aesthetic one, based on the universal appeal of Hergé's characters or the complex yet simple design of the panels, to a more in depth understanding of the connections between Tintin and the city. While initially designed to be temporary, the trail has become a part of the Nazairien landscape: since its creation in 1995, it has come to hold its own meaning, which caters to the wide range of audiences described above. This naturally raises the following question: Can such a literary trail be adapted, transposed? What would the pre-requisites be for another DMO to follow in the footsteps of this literary trail? In this section, the researcher will aim to highlight the results of his analysis in an attempt to provide prospective stakeholders with guidance on future projects featuring a comics-based homage.

This case study makes it clear that the Nazairien literary trail did not come to be due to a DMO's direct action, but rather from passionate individuals who came up with a clear project independently: members of *Les 7 Soleils* effectively worked on improving their city's destination image through an homage. Other stakeholders later joined the project upon seeing and understanding its potential, acknowledging its cultural value and its potential to improve the destination image of Saint-Nazaire. In fact, it is highly unlikely that the copyright owner would have granted the rights to Tintin characters had they been contacted by representatives from the city directly. Such an initiative as the Nazairien one was driven by passion, in a thought-out manner, and this passion and respect for the original work of the author undoubtedly helped it exist in the first place.

Recommendations to DMOs willing to explore a comics-based literary trail would not, however, entail being purely passive, or simply waiting for proposals from individuals or associations such as *Les 7 Soleils*. The researcher would however strongly advise ensuring that members of such a potential team be truly familiar with and interested in the work to which they are willing to pay homage. While not all members of a given DMO can be passionate about a specific work of art, this research proposes that specialist knowledge plays a key part in helping a trail come to life: not only does it help create a better-informed homage, it makes the whole trail more meaningful and therefore, more likely to be successful in the first place. A DMO is to be able to identify and either encourage or lead such creative initiatives (which may stem from associations or other stakeholders), and ensure that they be led by individuals with a genuine interest in the source material, and a desire to pay it homage. One off, or

temporary events could also be considered as a means of drawing attention and increasing exposure of the trail while benefitting the cultural importance of the trail to its real world location.

Finally, while all key components, or 'moments' within the circuit of culture played an active part in its inception, elaboration and/or continuous existence, the underlying theme present across all of these remains the concept of respect. Indeed, such a trail would never have seen the light of day had it not been for the deep respect of all the people involved for the source material and the city, and the desire to pay a meaningful homage to Hergé within a city his characters visited. This concept of respect might initially seem to refer to a moral value more so than actual, objective data, yet it has very direct implications in practice, which the literary trail fully reflects. The researcher cannot highlight enough how this concept transpired from every individual and entity they have been dealing with over the course of this research.

What forms does said respect take? To start with, the respect of Hergé, the *author*, was a given in that context. The researcher will not further repeat the reasons that sparked the idea of this trail, but the concept always was to pay a respectful homage. Respect of the *characters* is equally transparent; The landmarks were created as works of art designed to replicate their likeness as closely as possible, while being sustainable enough not to be damaged over time. The city, or *landscape*, is equally respected by all parties. The landmarks provide a window into the city's past, and are located in meaningful places – either by the port, or as a means to greet visitors to the city. They help revive the city's past in a tangible way. Finally, the researcher would argue that there is a strong respect for the visitor, or *tourist*. In catering to such a wide audience whilst acknowledging that everyone may draw something from the landmarks regardless of their experience of Tintin and the city, *Les 7 Soleils* do not take the trail's visitors by the hand, and respect their different experiences and interests. They acknowledge that not all visitors will make the conscious effort to contextualise the work or art, and will give it their own meaning in any case.

Respect is a *sine qua non* condition to the existence of such a trail for the obvious reason that it is designed as an homage. As a result, the Saint-Nazaire literary trail paying homage to Tintin cannot create direct economical wealth in the sense where a guided tour of a former film location could, and was never intended to do so. It instead adds to the appeal of a city and helps improve its destination image in an indirect but permanent manner.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

As stated earlier in this conclusion, one major element (and therefore limitation) to consider is the fact that this trail appears to be one of a kind at the time of writing. While individual homages to comic book characters in urban spaces do exist, none seem to follow the idea of a trail featuring landmarks across a location in that way, referencing a specific story. This is both an opportunity and a limitation, the main direct issue being that there are no direct points for comparison. As a result, the scope of this case study can be considered quite narrow.

Moreover, the trail under study began 25 years prior to this piece of writing. There are benefits to this; the trail and resources surrounding it have considerably developed over this time, and the number of landmarks considerably increased. It has also given the researcher the opportunity to assess that the landmarks have stood the test of time without any damage (Bréus, 2017). The fact the agreement between the copyright owner, the association and the city has been tacitly renewed over such a long period is equally meaningful. However, the age of the trail naturally made for several drawbacks; some paper resources (articles notably) may have been lost to time, and some staff from sponsors or members of the association may have left, changed careers, or, unfortunately, passed away. The researcher was able to partly mitigate this issue thanks to the always patient collaboration of Jean-Claude Chemin, who kindly agreed to share a wealth of resources that the researcher would have undoubtedly struggled to track down otherwise.

A further limitation of this research resides within feedback on the trail itself. Save for two dozen unprompted feedback excerpts online, tourist feedback on the literary trail is very scarce, and no reasonable way of collecting feedback could be found that would not have drastically increased the scope of this research given the way the landmarks are set up across the city. This element in particular seems like a natural route for further research, particularly given the importance of tourist feedback to a DMO seeking to improve a destination image (Bozbay & Özen, 2008;725). More specifically, obtaining feedback on a trail in its earlier stages would be beneficial to assess the way it develops over time.

Future research on comics-based literary trails could take several directions.



Figure 25: Photograph of the Saint-Nazaire submarine base and one of the enamelled panels showing Tintin running towards a cruise liner (Bréus, 2018)

A potential field worth further exploring is the case of previous attempts at building a literary trail that did not make it to completion. Over the course of this research, it became apparent that in the case of Tintin alone, several stakeholders had suggested producing similar trails to the Nazairien one in the past. However, it became equally clear that none of these projects came to fruition. Several credible sources¹¹ seem to indicate that an attempt was made in La Rochelle, as well as in Brussels. Given the limited scope of this research and the focus on the Saint-Nazaire case study, the researcher did not get to further explore these unsuccessful attempts, but further research could explore the reasons for this state of fact. More specifically, it would be beneficial to assess at which moment each proposal or project was cancelled, and how advanced it was at that point. Such a study could make use of research on abandonment decisions in project management (Long, Nasiry and Wu, 2016). This would enrich the corpus available on comics-based trails and provide prospective DMOs with valuable information on the matter.

¹¹ Note: these sources are commercially confidential and fall outside the scope of the ethical approval granted for this research.

Another possible lead for further research could be ethnographic, with the researcher engaging with a comics-based literary trail from the early stages of its development and documenting tourist experience. The concept of engaging ethnography as part of tourism research has notably been documented by Frohlick and Harrison (2008). While analysis of an existing and well-established trail has proven beneficial in extracting cultural meaning, as discussed in this conclusion, its evolution was not monitored and analysed in real time. Such a project would require identifying a developing trail as well as establishing a rapport with its stakeholders early on. This could enable stakeholders and DMOs to successfully identify cultural meaning within a comics and a location, and expand on both through a meaningful homage.

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¹² Note from the researcher: the Nazairien section of this work was pre-published in 1946, hence the mention of this date in the introduction to this work

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Feedback grid compiling results from an online search featuring the terms 'Tintin' and 'Saint-Nazaire', and identifying their implications for analysis.

Sources have been suitably anonymised.

Excerpt	Implication	Source
Le port de Saint-Nazaire a changé (...) mais l'ambiance d'un grand port de commerce y est toujours, ainsi que l'esprit du voyage.	-Discussing a remaining local identity -Praising the spirit of adventure	Alexandre
[Les vignettes] font revivre un pan de l'histoire nazairienne à jamais disparu.	-Discussing an aspect of local identity revived through the landmarks	Bruno
Les immenses vignettes (...) étonnent.	-Noting an element of surprise (due to size? Implied)	Celeste
Elles font complètement partie du décor et se fondent dans le paysage nazairien.	-Acknowledging the landmarks have been assimilated -And are part of the local landscape	Celeste
En reproduisant les vignettes de la BD et en les implantant là où Hergé a dessiné les scènes.	-Stating the existence of geographical accuracy	Celeste
Les 7 soleils ont installé, sur les lieux mêmes de l'histoire (...)	-Stating the existence of geographical accuracy	Damien
Voir Tintin et ses compagnons arpenter le port de Saint-Nazaire, dans le décor naturel du paysage portuaire, crée un effet de miroir assez troublant	-Discussing strong links between reality and fiction (mirror effect)	Damien
Hergé dessine ses héros dans la ville d'avant-guerre, à l'époque où Saint-Nazaire était encore la tête de ligne pour l'Amérique Centrale, au parfum d'aventure et d'exotisme.	-Discussing an aspect of local identity revived through the landmarks -Discussing a spirit of adventure and exotism	Damien
Me donne envie de relire mes « tintin »	-Expressing a desire to go back to source material	Eustache (comment)
L'alliance de la BC et du décor « véritable »....	-Discussing strong links between reality and fiction	Falbala (comment)

Et oui, à Saint-Nazaire on peut imaginer mettre les pas dans ceux des personnages de Hergé.	-Discussing strong links between reality and fiction	Grégoire (comment)
Malheureusement, la ville et le port ont été détruits. Mais l'imaginaire fait qu'on peut s'y croire malgré tout.	-Praising the power of imagination	Grégoire (comment)
[referring to the first landmark] Un échange entre Tintin et Haddock qui lie pour toujours la cité portuaire aux aventures du jeune journaliste.	-Discussing strong links between reality and fiction	Henri
Intégrés parfaitement au paysage, Tintin et Haddock semblent réellement déambuler sur les quais.	-Praising strong links between reality and fiction	Henri
La proue d'un paquebot vient compléter le dessin d'Hergé, le fondant encore plus dans le paysage du port de Saint-Nazaire.	-Praising strong links between reality and fiction	Henri
Digne d'un fantôme de bdphile (...)	-Praising strong links between reality and fiction -Praising the strong appeal of the trail to comic book aficionados	Isabelle
[Isabelle] n'a pas pu passer à côté sans les remarquer du haut de leur 5 mètres et de les 4 mètres 70 de large.	-Praising the scale of the landmarks	Isabelle
Les tintinophiles et touristes en tout genre auront le plaisir de découvrir Saint Nazaire sous le jour du tourisme industriel (Airbus, STX) [...]	-Praising the city's appeal to comic book lovers and tourists for its modern assets	Isabelle
[continued from previous excerpt] La cerise sur le gâteau étant ce parcours délicieusement geek et suffisamment original pour le remarquer et faire figure de proue pour d'autres villes.	-Praising the strong appeal of the trail to 'geeks', pop culture aficionados -Praising the originality of the trail -Noting the potential of such a trail for other DMOs	Isabelle
Du côté de la forme Joubert, vous pourrez également profiter de la vue d'une ancienne grue désossée et dont la silhouette ressemble étrangement à la fusée d'objectif lune style dieselpunk, prête à décoller.	-Praising strong links between reality and fiction -Expanding the trail through imagination	Isabelle
Ce parcours est un appel au voyage dans l'imaginaire et le réel, une ode au tourisme insolite et intelligent pour des publics de tout âge.	-Comparing the trail to an invitation to travelling -Praising the trail as an original means to promote unusual, intelligent tourism	Isabelle

	-Praising the universal appeal of the trail	
Petit bémol, certains panneaux ne sont pas facilement accessibles à pied ou par d'autres mobilités douce [...]	-Noting the potentially difficult access to some landmarks (implying that distance between landmarks can be too great)	Isabelle
A Saint-Nazaire, j'ai voyagé avec Tintin, j'ai remonté dans le temps.	-Comparing the trail to an invitation to travelling -Stating that the trail can make one virtually travel through time	Joanna
J'ai couru derrière le Général Alcazar, je me suis mêlée à la foule toujours vivante des vignettes colorées.	-Praising the trail for deepening strong links between reality and fiction	Joanna
Dans chacune des sept boules de cristal il scintillait encore, intact et miroitant, l'ardent émerveillement de mes lectures d'enfant.	-Indirectly praising the trail for reviving the source material -Praising the source material for its ability to cause wonderment	Joanna
Les traces de Tintin, je les suis tous les jours. J habite (sic) saint nazaire.	-Praising strong links between reality and fiction	Karl (comment)